



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

ROUTLEDGE'S ORIGINAL NOVELS

THE
LADDER OF LIFE
A HEART HISTORY

BY AMELIA B EDWARDS.



LONDON : GEO. ROUTLEDGE AND CO.

EIGHTEENPENCE

LONDON, FARRINGTON STREET.

SUITABLE FOR RAILWAY OR HOME READING.

New Books and New Editions,

PUBLISHED BY

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND CO.,

(And, by Order, of all Booksellers.)

SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON'S WORKS.

Price 1s. each.

LEILA; or, the Siege of Granada.

PILGRIMS OF THE RHINE.

Price 1s. 6d. each.

NIGHT AND MORNING.

GODOLPHIN.

LUCRETIA.

PAUL CLIFFORD.

PELHAM.

ALICE; or, the Mysteries.

DEVEREUX.

ERNEST MALTRAVERS.

DISOWNED (THE).

RIENZI.

LAST DAYS OF POMPEII.

EUGENE ARAM.

ZANONI.

Price 2s. each, boards.

MY NOVEL. 2 vols.

THE CLAYTONS.

HAROLD.

LAST OF THE BARONS.

"Now that the works of England's greatest novelist can be obtained for a few shillings, we can hardly imagine there will be any library, however small, without them."

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S WORKS.

Price 1s. each.

SCARLET LETTER.

HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES.

MOSES FROM AN OLD MANSE.

TWICE-FOLD TALES. 2 vols.

"Hawthorne is the best writer of fiction yet produced by America, and in style, thought, and the mode of telling a story, thoroughly original."

MISS EDGEWORTH'S WORKS.

Price 1s. each.

THE ABSENTEE.

MANEUVRING.

ENNUI.

VIVIAN.

"Sir Walter Scott, in speaking of Miss Edgeworth, says, that the rich humour, pathetic tenderness, and admirable tact that she displayed in her sketches of character, led him first to think that something might be attempted for his own country of the same kind with that which Miss Edgeworth fortunately achieved for hers."

JAMES GRANT'S WORKS.

HARRY OGILVIE.

FRANK HILTON.

THE YELLOW FEVER.

"The author of the 'Red Rover' has made him, perhaps, the most realistic of his characters, and his soldier spirit, with a skill in narrative shows."

which has made full of life and successfully through, 'Malley' seldom

RAILWAY AND HOME READING.

CAPTAIN MARRYAT'S WORKS.

Price 1s. 6d. each.

PETER SIMPLE.	PAGEA OF MANY TALKS.	KING'S OWN.
MIDSHIPMAN EAST.		RATTLIN THE REEFER (Edited.)

"Marryat's works abound in humour—real, unaffected, buoyant, overflowing humour. Many bits of his writings strongly remind us of Dickens. He is an incorrigible joker, and frequently relates such strange anecdotes and adventures, that the gloomiest hypochondriac could not read them without involuntarily indulging in the unwonted luxury of a hearty cackinnation."—*Dublin University Magazine*.

W. HARRISON AINSWORTH'S WORKS.

Price 1s. each.

THE MISER'S DAUGHTER.	SAINT JAMES'S.
WINDBOR CASTLE.	JAMES II. (Edited by.)

Also, uniform,

Price 1s. 6d., boards.	Price 2s. each.
BOOKWOOD.	TOWER OF LONDON.
CRICHTON.	LANCASHIRE WITCHES.
FLITCH OF BACON.	

"Now that a cheap Edition of Mr. Ainsworth's Novels is published, we doubt not but that thousands will now possess what thousands have before been only able to admire."

J. F. COOPER'S WORKS.

Price 1s. 6d. each.

LAST OF THE MOHICANS.	DEERSLAYER.
SPY.	OAK OPENINGS.
LIONEL LINCOLN.	PATHFINDER.
PILOT.	HEADSMAN.
PIONEERS.	WATER WITCH.
SEA LIONS.	TWO ADMIRALS.
BORDERERS, or Heathcotes.	MILES WALLINGFORD.
BRAVO.	PRAIRIE.
HOMEWARD BOUND.	RED ROVER.
AFLOAT AND ASHORE.	EYE EFFINGHAM.
BATASTON.	HIDDEN MAZE.
WYANDOTTE.	

"Cooper constructs enthralling stories, which hold us in breathless suspense, and make our brows alternately pallid with awe and terror, or flushed with powerful emotion: when once taken up, they are so fascinating, that we must perforce read on from beginning to end, panting to arrive at the thrilling dénouement."—*Dublin University Magazine*.

ALBERT SMITH'S WORKS.

Price 2s. each, boards; or 2s. 6d. cloth gilt.

ADVENTURES OF MR. LEDBURY.	SCATTERGOOD FAMILY.
CHRISTOPHER TADPOLE.	POTTERTON LEGACY.

And price 1s. 6d., boards.

THE MARCHIONESS OF BEINVILLIERS; the Poisoner of the 17th Century.

"Albert Smith's name, as the author of any work, is quite sufficient to prove that it is an interesting one, and one that can be read with pleasure by every one."

THE ROVING ENGLISHMAN'S WORKS.

Price 1s.

THE ROVING ENGLISHMAN; or,
Sketches on the Continent.

Price 2s., boards.

TURKEY, by the Roving Englishman,
being Sketches from Life.

"Who is unfamiliar with those brilliant sketches of naval, particularly the pictures of Turkish, life and manners, from the pen of the 'Roving Englishman,' and who does not hail their collection into a companionable size volume with delight?"



600069659+

THE
LADDER OF LIFE:

A Heart-History.

By AMELIA B. EDWARDS,

AUTHOR OF

"MY BROTHER'S WIFE," ETC. ETC.

LONDON:
GEO. ROUTLEDGE & CO., FARRINGDON STREET.
NEW YORK: 18, BEEKMAN STREET.
1857.

249. 3. 529.

LONDON:
SAVILL AND EDWARDS, PRINTERS, CHANDOS STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. SPRING LEAVES	5
II. MADAME DE WALD	12
III. THE CHALET IN THE VALE	19
IV. THE FÊTE OF ST. NICHOLAS	22
V. CONVALESCENCE	35
VI. THE BOY-DREAMER	38
VII. THE FIRST OF JULY	42
VIII. GIRLHOOD	51
IX. "FARÉWELL GOES OUT SIGHING"	56
X. A HEIDELBERG STUDENT	61
XI. THE OLD, OLD STORY	69
XII. SHADOWS	77
XIII. THE STORM AT LAST	79
XIV. IN TRANSITU	87
XV. THE WIGGLESWORTH FAMILY	93
XVI. FROM BASLE TO OSTEND	99
XVII. A NIGHT OF PERIL	105
XVIII. THE BLUE LION	110
XIX. THE STEM AND THE BLOSSOM	124
XX. THE POETRY OF SOUND	133
XXI. A VALUABLE DISCOVERY	143

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXII. THE SKELETON IN THE HOUSE	147
XXIII. THE COLLEGE HORNPIPE	158
XXIV. BEHIND THE SCENES	164
XXV. THE MAIDEN AND THE MYSTIC	172
XXVI. MUSIC AND METAPHYSICS	177
XXVII. TRAVELLING SKETCHES	180
XXVIII. HOME AGAIN	198
XXIX. THE DÉBUTANTE	203
XXX. UNDER THE SHADE OF THE UPAS	207
XXXI. GIBLETS	211
XXXII. A PROJECT FULFILLED	216
XXXIII. THE FIRST NIGHT	221
XXXIV. MR. GAMMIDGE'S SECRET	226
XXXV. THE MEXICAN PISTOLS	232
XXXVI. CONFESSION	238
XXXVII. A DINNER WITH MALIBRAN	244
XXXVIII. THE AYLERS	255
XXXIX. "THOSE OTHER TIMES"	264
XL. THE SHADOW AMONG THE POPLARS	274
XLI. WESTWARD HO!	282
XLII. THE LONE HOUSE BY THE SEA	288
XLIII. MADAME ONCE MORE	297
XLIV. THE UNWINDING OF THE THREADS	300
XLV. ON THE LAKE OF GENEVA	309
L'ENVOI	311

THE LADDER OF LIFE.

CHAPTER. I.

SPRING LEAVES.

QUIET, quaint, antique city of Fribourg!

I must be forgiven if, on the very threshold of my history, I am induced to linger awhile over that, dearest and earliest remembrance. It was my birthplace. Every gray old tower, every narrow winding street, every green hill and pine-covered height is as distinctly present to me as though I had but just gazed out upon it from yonder window. It seems to me, as I sit in the silence of my chamber, that I yet hear the busy Saarine bubbling along its shallow bed, and the cathedral bells chiming in softly with the evening air. But, alas! that was "many and many a year ago," and the broad ocean now lies between me and the blue river that sang songs to my childhood.

The blue river—blue as the summer sky—tinted here and there with green shadows of the hills, and streaks of brown where the stream runs shallowest! It traverses our Canton from end to end, and at this point takes a sudden and capricious bend around the rock on which the greater part of our city is built, leaving the centre of its bed lying high and dry in the hot summer time, and curling round under the house walls and garden banks, where the channel lies deeper.

Fribourg consists of two parts—the Haute Ville and the Basse Ville. The Haute Ville stands upon the central rock, with the cathedral high in the midst. The Basse Ville lies down beneath, upon the verge of level land and

river-bank at the foot of the steep. The upper stories of the old red houses overhang the water. All round city and stream—sometimes sloping gently upward and covered with clustering apple-trees and corn-fields, and pastures of deep grass; sometimes overgrown by pines and bushes, and traversed by tiny sheep-walks; sometimes sheering perpendicularly down to the river, all worn by water-courses, and laying bare rough strata of chalk and sandstone and red clay—rise the high hills that enclose that secluded valley. Long, embattled walls, broken at intervals by quaint, square towers, with pointed roofs and antique weathercocks, run along the heights and meet the outer fortifications looking towards the range of the Simmenthal; whilst, spanning one deep and sudden gorge at a picturesque spot overlooking the Basse Ville, a light arrowy iron bridge—a mere rod in the distance—stretches from cliff to cliff, with the ravine winding away beneath it. All along the declivity between the two quarters of the city lie, side by side, the steep, narrow gardens of the industrious Fribourgers—a hillside of foliage and flowers, separating the whiter and loftier architecture of the upper town from the clustering streets of old brown-tiled houses and crumbling steeples down beside the river.

Three bridges connect the city with the opposite banks—the stone-bridge; the suspension-bridge (which crosses the best and broadest part of the current); and the covered bridge between the Basse Ville and the Water-Gate.

In the upper chambers of this Water-Gate, I, Natalie Metz, passed the years of my first childhood.

It was a gloomy, dusty, dreamy place, that ancient dwelling above the Gate! The rooms were wainscotted in carved oak and walnut wood, black with age, and the narrow windows, deeply sunk in the thick walls, were barred with stanchions of rusty iron, like the windows of a prison. Fragments of old tapestry, dropping to pieces with age and retaining no vestige of their former dyes, still clung to some portions of the wainscot, and to the old canopied bedsteads, that stood rotting in the dark garret under the roof, where the wind made strange moan-

ings in the night, and where, as a child, I rarely ventured even by day. Up there were piled heaps of forgotten furniture; old armoires without shelves or hinges; great iron-clamped chests, with massive handles at each end; antique arm-chairs, and portraits in heavy frames, on which the moth had feasted for long years. In one dark corner—how well I remember it!—stood a dilapidated chariot, resembling in shape the sedan-chairs of two centuries ago, with all its glass broken, its gilded heraldry defaced, and its wheels lying uselessly on one side. No window opened on this dreary storehouse, and the pale light, straying in through fractures in the roof, imparted a weird aspect to every dim and shapeless object.

Our rooms below were not much more cheerful. Sitting there at night by the radiance of one feeble lamp, while my father nodded in his arm-chair, I could hear the rats at work under the flooring, and the water lapsing on through the dark arch beneath us. I was terribly afraid of that dark arch. Long weeds hung round the entrance, and the rusted teeth of the old portcullis looked grim and threatening, like the jaws of a giant in a fairy story. My tiny chamber overlooked the Saarine just where it rushed, eddying and foaming, against the single pier of the covered bridge. I used to lie awake for hours in the moonlight, listening to its noisy song, and it seemed to me that these midnight sounds made the solitary dwelling still more silent. Brown lichens, foster-children of decay, spread over the gabled-roof above our heads; wild grasses waved along the crumbling walls; and there was many a swallow's nest clinging under the broad eaves and in the corners of the embrasures.

It was a cheerless home, and a dull life for a young child like me; yet I was not unhappy. I had an earnest and passionate love of reading, and such few books as my father possessed I almost knew by heart. Amongst these the "Lives of the Saints," the "History of William Tell," the "Travels of Kotzebue," and the "Life of Peter the Great," were my favourite studies. Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday I spent the afternoon at the

house of Madame de Wald, and these days were the happiest in my calendar. Madame de Wald was my father's patroness. It was to her kind offices that he owed the guardianship of the old Water-Gate; it was she who educated and clothed me when my mother died; it was with her own son that I studied up to the age of fourteen. From two till five we used to sit in the beautiful old library, writing, reading, and translating. At half-past five we had tea. From six to eight we played in the courtyard, or, if the weather were unfavourable, in one of the great empty rooms upstairs. At half-past eight I was sent home under the care of a servant. Ah, what delightful hours were those! With what awe, and yet with what longing, I used to gaze on those long rows of dusty volumes in the library behind the wirework screen! It seemed to me that all the books in the world must be there, and I could not believe that I should ever be old enough, or clever enough, to read them. Then there was the lesson on geography, when Madame would lead us over to the great globes in the bay-window, and, turning them slowly in her white hands, describe to us the wonders of the deep sea, and the islands of the tropics where grow the spice trees and the almond groves; the long reading in history, when our hearts beat over the glories of the field of Agincourt, and our tears fell over the death of Bayard; the merry meal of fresh bread and yellow honey, when we were allowed to have three lumps of sugar in our tea!

I have but little recollection of my mother. She died when I was scarcely four years old, and such memories as I have preserved of that fair face that used to bend over me as I lay curtained in my narrow crib, are hardly so much memories as faint pictures almost faded from my mind—vague, broken, and uncertain, like reflections seen in water. It is singular, but I dreamt of her more frequently than I thought of her, and many a night have I started from my dreams, calling loudly on her name, then sobbed myself to sleep again, because she came not.

My father was a strange man—a cold man—a man without impulses and without emotions. I did not fear

him, for he was never angry with me; but I felt an invincible reserve towards him—a reserve so great and overwhelming that I believe, had any heavy sorrow fallen upon me, my heart would have broken ere I could have discovered it to him. I do not suppose for an instant that my father was utterly indifferent to me; nay, I think that he cared for me as much as he could care for anything; yet I cannot remember that he ever bestowed a caress upon me in his life. He would sit for hours with his pipe at his lips and his newspaper spread before him on the table, without looking at me. When he spoke, and that was very seldom, it was in the fewest words possible. Though a mere child, he treated me with the distant gravity due to an adult, and never seemed to imagine that I could need the simple amusements of youth. Thus it happened that a few dry books, and my regular visits to Madame de Wald, were all the pleasures that I knew. Thus it happened that, even in that season when life is sunniest, I became silent and earnest, full of dreams and musings, self-controlled and self-contained.

Yet there was one great and signal privilege which I sometimes enjoyed, and which, perhaps, contributed more than any one could then have imagined, towards the formation of that peculiar frame of mind, so subdued, yet so impressionable, which has ever since remained with me through the chances and changes of an uncertain fortune.

Briefly, I allude to those precious opportunities that I had of hearing the evening performances on our cathedral organ.

Celebrated, not so much for its power or size, as for the absolutely perfect beauty of its tones, the organ of Fribourg cathedral is the chief glory of the community, and the sole inducement for which the passing traveller sometimes turns aside from more populous and attractive routes to visit the capital of our quiet little Canton. The diligences from Geneva and Vevay arrive about six o'clock in the evening, and at eight the organist plays for three-quarters of an hour. It was at these times that I (perhaps the most breathless and enthusiastic of his audience) was now and then admitted.

My father was by trade an organ-pipe maker. His opportunities of employment were few; but he was entrusted by the civic authorities with the repairing of the great organ, which alone occupied his time, and furnished us with a moderate subsistence. To this circumstance, it will be seen, I owed the indulgence of the vergers and my accustomed nook behind the font in the side-aisle during that magical hour when the sweet and solemn sounds vibrated along transept and choir, and carried every thought and feeling heavenward.

Shrinking down there, unseen and silent, just within sight of those rows of silvery pipes, which gleamed through the dusk like stands of gigantic lances, I yielded up my whole soul to the influences of the place. And it is not wonderful that I should have been so affected, for that scene might well have impressed a nature less vivid than mine.

Scattered here and there in the gloom, near the altar, sat generally some few strangers, fixed as statues. Facing them, at the farther extremity of the building, a bright jet of gas burnt, like a star, behind the red curtains of the organ-loft. Close around it some jutting ornaments in brass caught up brilliant points of light against the deep obscurity in which the rest of the instrument was thrown; whilst the vaulted roof, the pillared nave, the side-chapels, and the lofty altars were cast into a mysterious shadow through which all objects seemed multiplied and all proportion vaster.

So, from the midst of this darkness and silence, the music would come stealing through the aisles, soft at first, and prayerful, like a chorus of angels, till one impassioned strain, detaching itself from the rest like a sad voice, soared over all and carried our hearts away; then, as if overborne by its own intensity, sobbed and faded upon the upper air, and was heard no more. Next we had, perhaps, a grave and stately march, with trumpet-sounds and bugles, whose echoes wandered, as it were, from camp to camp till lost in the far distance. And next again, a precious movement, traversed by strange flights of

sound, elfin, startling, and grotesque as the goblin gargoyles perched outside along the cornices of the roof.

Rapt and breathless, following with my own quaint and glowing fancies every delicate passage, every melancholy cadence, every fantastic and picturesque interlude of the skilful player, I have oftentimes rested my throbbing temples against the cold steps of the marble font, and experienced emotions of such deep awe as left me pale and weary all the succeeding day.

My visits to the cathedral were not, however, all made up of these delicious trances. If I there enjoyed the highest pleasures, I earned them by the keenest sufferings of my childhood—sufferings which, though I cannot now recal them without a smile, have never been exceeded by the bitterest of my later trials.

To begin, then; I never passed the porch except by a strong effort. There was a certain carving up above the doors which I held in mortal terror, and which so possessed my imagination with superstitious horrors that I scarcely remember a night of my life, up to the age of nine or ten years, when I did not dream of it. It is a ludicrous and fantastic thing enough; yet to me it was as the ratification of an appalling truth, and every grinning demon seemed endued with life, and set up there to threaten me. It represented the Day of Judgment, with God and the angels overhead, and the tombs below. To the left, St. Peter with his key admits the righteous into a small round fortress, supposed to be the heavenly gate. To the right yawns a gigantic dragon busily devouring the wicked, who are crowded helplessly together in its jaws. Farther away, the dead are seen to struggle from their sepulchres, and a frightful imp, with the head of a bear and the claws of a vulture, bears the condemned in a basket, and is about to supply the dragon with his hideous meal. Now, I well knew that this thing was no more than a tablet of carved stone, yet I feared it with a fear beyond expression. There were even times when I could not pass it; when I have been forced to give up the music within, and fly homewards with what speed I could.

Say, however, that I contrived to glide in behind some party of travellers ; or, with incredible pains and ingenuity, attracted the notice of old Kappeler, the verger, so that he came out himself to speak to me, and led me in by the hand ; my tortures were only then begun.

Towards the middle of the nave, placed conspicuously on either side of the central passage leading to the high altar stood two funeral biers. The heavy palls with which they were covered were embroidered with skulls and crossbones. The mysterious words, *Cras Tibi Mors* were painted along the ends of the platforms.

It were vain to attempt a description of the agonies I endured from the sight of these objects. More than this, were I even so placed that I could not see them, I suffered as much from the mere knowledge of their being near at hand. I preferred the misery of watching them to the greater, because less definite, misery of feeling that they were close, and yet unseen.

Groundless anguish ; but intense as groundless ! Judge then, by my courage and constancy, how supreme must have been that fascination which could tempt me back and back again through trials than which the midnight ordeals imposed upon the aspirants in the temples of old Greece were scarcely more severe !

Happy, happy years of childhood, whose griefs are all forgotten in our later life, or remembered only with a smile, and whose joys are realities for ever !

CHAPTER II.

MADAME DE WALD.

DOWN in the heart of the Basse Ville, enclosed by a wilderness of narrow streets, and surrounded by a dreary courtyard all overgrown with thistles and long grass, stands a fine old mansion built after that quaint but not ungraceful style common to the architecture of France in

the sixteenth century. The roof is steep and slated. The narrow windows are surrounded by highly ornate entablatures, now crumbling and discoloured, representing wreaths of fruits and flowers, masks and instruments of music. A double flight of lofty steps rises from the ground to the entrance-door, which is placed at an elevation but little lower than the windows of the first story. A broken octagonal fountain, choked by moss and long since dry, occupies the centre of the courtyard; and at the end of the enclosure, incorporated, as it were, with the boundary wall, rises a small dilapidated church with a tiny bulbous leaded cupola, like the helmet of an old German halberdier. From the dusk and silent chambers of that quiet house we heard the voice of the preacher, and the chanting of the priests at morning and evening. The western breeze carried in dreamy waftings of incense through the open windows. From the lower branches of the solitary linden-tree at the end of the courtyard one might even peep down upon the kneeling congregation. I did so once, dared to it by the taunts of my wild playmate, and I shall never forget the thrill of horror with which I found myself face to face with the priest in the pulpit, and his eyes turned full upon me. Inspired by shame's desperate courage, I made but one leap to the ground, and never ventured to climb the linden-tree again.

Louis de Wald was two years younger than myself, fair, frank, and bold; full of boyish mischief, delighting in danger, and brave as a lion. You could hear his merry laugh ring from top to bottom of the old house, and the mere sight of his bright eyes and dancing curls made "a sunshine in the shady place." He was his mother's idol; and though he vexed me twenty times a day, I could no more have helped forgiving him the next minute than I could have helped loving the spring flowers, or weeping when I heard sweet music.

Though so much younger, Louis was more advanced in his education than I. At ten years of age he could write and speak both French and German fluently, showed taste for drawing, played tolerably upon the pianoforte, and

made Latin hexameters of questionable merit. I often repeated my lessons to him when Madame was busy; but I fear that, on those occasions, I made little progress.

There was a large empty room at the top of Madame de Wald's house which was Louis' especial domain, and which we made our playroom. Here he kept his toys, fishing-tackle, carpenter's tools, paints, chemicals, story-books, and other worthless treasures. And here, during one inclement winter, when we were forced to amuse ourselves indoors as best we might, we formed the gigantic project of building a theatre and acting plays. The *corps dramatique*, 'tis true, was somewhat limited; but Louis undertook to write historical dramas, and even tragedies, in which there should be only two characters, so that difficulty was removed on starting. The theatre was soon built. Two brass hooks, a few yards of cord, and a piece of old chintz-hanging were all the materials that we needed. With these we made a curtain which divided the room in two parts—stage and pit. The next thing was to prepare the scenery. Of this we promised ourselves an infinite variety. Louis was to design—I to colour. As we had neither canvas nor oils, and should not have known how to use them if we had, we agreed to paste pieces of paper together, till the surface thus produced was large enough to cover the wall at the end of the room, and to display to its fullest advantage the scenic skill of the artists. Alas! we had ill calculated the extent of our enterprise. It was the labour of a week's playtime only to stick the papers together; and when this was done, we were forced to acknowledge that we had neither patience nor material for a second. Here was a dilemma indeed. If we painted this one as a landscape, the entire action of our pieces must take place in the open air; if as an interior, the scene must always be laid in a building. Happily a bright idea came to our aid. It should represent both, and so be made suitable for every emergency. Delighted to have extricated ourselves from this last perplexity, we laboured with renewed enthusiasm, and had in a few days completed a picture that was nothing

less than a triumph. Half of its surface represented the section of a furnished mansion, with a window, a picture, a door, and a piece of curtain. This was to stand for palace or cottage, as the occasion required. The other half was filled by a landscape of singularly varied features, comprising a chalet, a castle, a mountain, a forest, a waterfall, a bridge, a church, a rivulet, and a background of sea. The perspective may not, perhaps, have been strictly accurate; but the effect was striking.

This done, Louis was not long writing his first play; and in less than a month from the conception of our plan, we gave our opening entertainment.

We invited all the household, and Madame occupied an arm-chair, with a flag overhead, which we called "the throne." The play was founded upon the story of "William Tell," and the characters were three in number. I played the part of Tell's son, and my companion undertook to do justice to the patriot and the tyrant. In order to give effect to the double part and establish the necessary delusion, he had provided two hats, one decorated with a paper feather, and one of simple straw. These he changed according to the dialogue. Nor was that all. When reciting Gessner's speeches he waved his right hand, and when Tell's he waved his left. We thought this a very remarkable piece of dramatic art indeed, and were not a little proud of it.

Not to enter needlessly into the details of this event, which filled our young hearts with such pride and pleasure, I may observe that we put our whole souls and all the power of our lungs into the declamation, that we knew our parts without an error, and that certain soliloquies and dialogues bore a curious and quite unaccountable resemblance to passages in Schiller.

The scene in the market-place went off triumphantly, and we arrived at that wherein the apple is shot. Here we meant to produce an unlooked-for effect—which we did, though not quite in the manner we expected. Now Louis strutted about with the superb bow and arrows which had been sent to him from England on his last birthday—I

rather think he chose his subject for the purpose. Now I stood against the wall balancing a golden pippin on my head, which was very difficult. Now it was grand to see Louis defy the tyrant; then, as the tyrant, defy himself, and call himself "vile slave!" Now he seizes the bow—fits the arrow to the string—raises his eyes to heaven—fires; and I, startled out of my self-possession, and unable to repress a cry of pain, swerve suddenly on one side, send the apple rolling towards the audience, and pressing my little hands against my cheek, bring them away covered with blood!

In the ardour of his patriotism he had forgotten the precautions agreed upon beforehand, and had aimed more accurately than was either safe or pleasant.

All was confusion in an instant. Madame sprang forward and caught me in her arms—the servants crowded round—Louis stood pale and terrified, with the unlucky weapons in his hand. In vain I urged that it was nothing—that I did not feel it at all—that I only cried because I was startled—that I could go on with my part quite well if they would only let me. I was carried down stairs to have the wound washed and bound up; the properties were flung into a corner; the theatre left in darkness and disorder; and the theatrical entertainment abruptly ended for that evening.

After all, the injury was not worth naming, though, had the arrow struck but a tiny bit higher, it might have cost me an eye. My cheek was rather badly grazed, and some weeks elapsed before the scar disappeared. But the incident threw a damp over our dramatic ardour. From this time forth the plays underwent a rigid censorship from Madame, and, when the spring came, we tacitly resigned them altogether.

But this reminds me that I have too long deferred my description of Madame de Wald. What do I say?—a description of Madame! Alas! how am I to describe such an union of gentleness, wisdom, and refinement? Loving and most reverent should be any mention of her from my pen; yet the more I reflect upon her goodness to me, the

more I strive to measure my gratitude and affection by the standard of her excellence and the benefits inalienable conferred by her upon my childhood, the more I feel how inadequate I am to the proper performance of so sweet a duty!—But I will try.

Madame was by birth an Englishwoman, and had, while yet very young, married Monsieur de Wald, a German Swiss, of large fortune, resident at Berne, to whom she was united scarcely four years when she became a widow. Unable longer to endure the scene of her happiness, and anxious to superintend some of her estates lying in the Canton of Fribourg, she came hither with her only child, then two years of age; took up her abode in an old, secluded, but convenient house, which had formerly been the residence of her husband's mother, and here devoted her life to the boy's education. Madame was tall, and, though still young, prematurely gray. There was something inexpressibly noble and touching in the expression of her face—in the earnest gravity of her dark eyes—in the faint lines traced around her mouth—in that pure and candid brow "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." Looking upon her, one felt the presence of a sincere and lofty nature, and was prompted almost to kiss that white and slender hand, half hidden in the cuff of over-falling lace, which she held out with so gracious, yet so stately a greeting.

Of honourable descent in her native country, Madame, without being for a moment what the world would call proud, could not conceal a certain sense of aristocracy—a native royalty that yet more distinguished and became her. She was not conscious of it herself. It was born with her. It showed in her very walk, in her smile, in the rustling of her silken robe. When she bowed, it was with the bearing of a princess; and when she spoke, no matter upon what subject, her hearers, influenced by some nameless superiority, became "subdued even to the very quality" of her mood. "*Elle avait conservé ce parfum de langage et de manières qui ne s'évapore pas plus que l'odeur des pastilles de rose du sérail ne s'évapore du cristal*

où elles ont été conservées." None felt this influence more than I. No one, I am sure, could more worshipfully love, admire, honour her. Only to hear her voice calling me by name made my heart beat faster and my colour come and go; and a passing word of praise, a smile, a kiss, filled me with a joy too deep for utterance, and sent me to some solitary corner where I might repeat the word again and again, or recal the brief caress, and every circumstance of its bestowal.

Let those who, reading this, can scarce credit the power of passion in one so young, remember that the little Natalie had never known a mother's—hardly a father's—love. What wonder, then, that I hung upon her every word and gesture, strove to anticipate her thoughts ere she could utter them, and fell asleep at night with her name upon my lips?

Her method for our instruction was singular. Unlike many, she never sought to embellish or artificially facilitate the dry portions of study. She disdained all false helps, and taught us to disdain them likewise. If the thing were abstruse and crabbed, she told us so—explained the most difficult points, and left us to accomplish the task by our own efforts. The plan might not succeed with all children as with us, but it roused our pride, taught us self-reliance, made us thinkers and doers from the first.

In this manner we acquired the unimaginative branches of our education; but not thus did we learn everything.

Madame was of opinion that the mere remembrance of dates and latitudes constitutes the least portion of the knowledge of a sound historian or geographer. It was her principal object to store our minds with vivid pictures of customs, of climates, of costumes, of races, of strange and varied vegetations—and these not separately, or as mere visions of an enthusiastic imagination, but twin with each date, and fact, and latitude of the schools.

In pursuance of this object, she would herself take the volume from our hands, and selecting from it some one event—such, for instance, as the third Crusade—would bring before our eyes in rapid and picturesque succession

the relative civilization of the Saracenic and European races; the refined luxury of the Eastern warrior; the semi-barbarous chivalry of Richard and his allies; the bulky galleys, with their freight of soldier and steed; the Orient sky, with its strange stars; the wastes of blinding sand; the bituminous lake; the lone oasis, with its solitary palm and trickling spring.

So with our walks—so with our very sports and pastimes. A fragment of crystal found by the road-side—a weed-like herb, known in old time as a simple of charmed power—the stony outline of a Roman camp upon the hill-tops—a marbled pebble—an insect—a fern—all sights and sounds of nature, “she turned to favour and to prettiness,” making a fairy story of our daily life, and leading us ever onward.

A system so judicious could scarcely fail of its fruits. Reason and imagination were cultivated together, and knowledge made, not only serious, but beautiful.

I owed her all—the awakening of my mind; the unfolding of my affections; the love of right and the fear of wrong. Heaven bless her!

CHAPTER III.

THE CHALET IN THE VALE.

THERE are many roads leading from Fribourg to Berne. One of these, the least frequented, and, perhaps, the loveliest, lies through a green valley some three miles in length, closed in on either side by dark pine forests where the sunlight never pierces, and traversed from end to end by a clear, dancing brook, which bubbles over the shining pebbles close by the traveller's feet and keeps him pleasant company all the way. Here and there, though at long intervals, you come upon a lonely inn or a rustic mill, where a little gush of water, conducted through a trough rudely hollowed out of an old mossy beech-trunk, turns

the mill-wheel after our simple Swiss fashion. Wild strawberries and foxgloves grow in the grass among the trees, and beds of deep green moss lie low in the shade. Sometimes a peasant girl, with black embroidered bodice, and sleeves of snow-white lawn, trudges by with her cows and her milk-can. Sometimes the faint and far-away note of a herdsman's horn, or a solitary voice scattering fragments of a wild ballad, breaks the living silence. All is very still here—still and most lovely; like the waste of blue sky overhead, where not a vapour sails.

About midway through this sylvan pass stood, in those childish days of mine, a quaint and picturesque old chalet. It may be there still for aught I know; and, indeed, I am sure that it was yet in existence some four or five years back. It was built of some kind of brown wood, and the planked roof looked like a great inverted boat. A carved balcony ran all round the house, and was entered by a flight of steps leading up from the road. Under the broad eaves, which so far projected as to make a covered way of the balcony, were hung up bunches of dried herbs for winter uses; and beneath them, ranged on a sturdy wooden bench, stood a row of thatched beehives. A little further on (for this balcony was granary, storehouse, and all), a pile of firewood and a considerable quantity of hay stacked up against the wall, spoke well for the thrift and comfort of the inmates. An open stall beside the door, hung round with carved spoons and bowls, and other trifles delicately cut in fine white wood, served for both shop and workshop. A basin, of worn stone, filled with fresh water from the brook, stood at the wayside, that tired horses passing by might stay and drink. Pots of roses and geraniums were placed at every window. And an inscription, painted in gaily-coloured letters all across the front of the house, announced that Jacques Oetiker made and sold Swiss toys, and that "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith."

Jacques Oetiker had been one of my poor mother's oldest and kindest friends. He was her second cousin, and

I have heard it said that he loved her passionately in her youth. But while she was yet a child he had already passed the verge of middle age, and was moreover lame and plain of feature. She loved another. He was rejected. So the story ran; and be the truth what it might, Jacques never married, but here lived a solitary life with his orphan nephew, Laurent, whom he had adopted; and was a true and faithful friend to my mother all her life; and not only to my mother, but to me when I had lost her.

Kind, generous, simple Jacques Oetiker! I can see him now, with his pinched and weather-beaten face bent earnestly over his work in the little stall beside his door. I can see him rise and hobble out, his white apron tied round him, and his spectacles pushed up above his eyebrows, welcoming me with outstretched hands. I can hear him call me, "little Natalie," "little lily-flower," "little fairy-queen"—tell me what sweet honey his bees had made for me; what pretty roses were blowing for me at the window of my own little sleeping-room; and then saying, tremulously, "You grow like her, Natalie; you grow like her," see him turn suddenly away, and pass his hand hastily across his eyes.

I used to go there about once in every year, and stay for some two or three weeks at a time. It was the farthest distance to which I had ever travelled—the limit of my little world. I thought it the most beautiful spot on earth. They always kept a little bedroom for me, which no one else was ever suffered to occupy—a charming little bedroom looking out upon the valley and the farspreading pine-tops, decorated with a view of Zurich and two pots of roses, and containing a bed with white hangings that an angel might have slept in.

Somehow or another my father was not pleased when I went there. He never refused to let me go; but he consented with reluctance. It cost him an effort. Let me not be mistaken here—the effort was not needed to part from me, for he could do that easily enough; but he had an aversion to my mother's old lover. It was with difficulty that he even spoke to him civilly, and he shrank

back, imperceptibly to every eye but mine, when compelled to shake him by the hand. I shed tears over this many and many a night when I first observed it; for I heartily loved Jacques Oetiker and all his household. But it was a rooted antipathy, and when my father disliked, he disliked for ever.

Jacques had a curious cart, which was half a chaise, or more like a chaise added on to the front of a cart than anything else. It went on four wheels, was painted dark-green, and had cushions in the front seat covered with orange-coloured leather. This place of honour held two only; but the back, if provided with stools or straw, would have held six persons at the least. It served many purposes, holding sometimes hay and sometimes live-stock, as he happened to be buying provender for his horse or goats for his meadow. Ugly as it was, I thought it the smoothest, smartest, and pleasantest vehicle in the world; and to have it come *for me* to Fribourg—to ride back in it beside Laurent through all the waterside quarter of the Basse Ville—to traverse the hills and the green valley, and to see the white smoke faintly rising above the trees before the old brown chalet came in sight, filled my little heart with such pride and enjoyment as I cannot now find words to express.

And this brings me nearer to events which I must relate somewhat more at length, and which influenced beyond all calculation the after-tenor of my life.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FETE OF ST. NICHOLAS.

DESTITUTE of all religious education, I was, however, elevated in accordance with the tenets of the Roman Catholic persuasion. My father was a Roman Catholic; if, indeed, a passing genuflexion before a roadside cross, and a very infrequent attendance at the services of the

church may be said to have constituted him one of its members. He never confessed, or fasted, or did penance. He never seemed to be actuated by that blind but touching piety which gilds the hollow shows of Romanism with a glory like that of the setting sun, and soothes with glittering hope the earthly trials of the confiding enthusiast. This being the case, it is not surprising that he should have omitted to cultivate in me that condition of mind which he neglected in himself; or that a few Aves, a hymn or two to the Virgin, and some vague terrors gathered from legend and missal, should have comprised all that I understood by the word Religion. Nor could Madame de Wald here come to my assistance. She was a Protestant; and this one subject she avoided with a delicacy and wisdom that I then was too young to appreciate. So I learned little and thought less of the faith which, poor child, I was supposed to profess; and therefore it was with a curious feeling made up of surprise, curiosity, and reluctance, that I one day heard my father announce his intention of sending me to take part in the approaching fête of the parish.

"I mean Natalie to walk in the procession of St. Nicholas."

It was a sunny spring afternoon, and my father was standing at the door that opened from the Water-Gate into the narrow street beyond. He held his pipe in his hand, spoke slowly and decisively, and addressed this observation to Madame Kehrl, a poor widow who kept a little shop over the way, and whose occasional kind glances and friendly nods had often cheered my solitude as I sat alone beside the window conning my lessons, or idly watching the few passers-by who took that road to the gorge of Gotteron.

I mean Natalie to walk in the procession of St. Nicholas!

I shrank back into the gloom of the passage whither I had followed him, and listened eagerly. Madame Kehrl was speaking now. Her voice was low and hesitating, and I could distinguish nothing of her reply. Presently my father went on:—

"Why, it is at the suggestion of Father Eustache. He met me up by the Rathhaus, and complained, as usual, that the child had not yet been confirmed, or even sent to any of the fêtes that have lately been celebrated. So I promised she should go this time."

"And when is it to be, neighbour?" I heard her say.

"To-morrow morning."

"To-morrow morning! How can she be ready by then?"

"Ready! Easily enough, I should think."

"But she must have a nice little white dress, you know, neighbour."

"Well, has she not a white dress?"

"Yes; but she has been wearing it half the week, and it is quite soiled."

My father shrugged his shoulders, puffed away at his pipe, and vouchsafed no reply. Madame Kehrli returned to the charge.

"She ought to have a new frock, neighbour, or, at the least, a clean one. Shall I go and see if Lisa Müller will lend us one of her children's, just for the day?"

"Not for a gold piece," exclaimed my father impatiently.

"I will not be under an obligation to any one."

"But Natalie will be shabbier than all the rest of the children!"

"So she must be, then," said my father, with an angry gesture. "I have said that she shall go, and she shall go, no matter how. Good day to you, Madame Kehrli."

He turned away and shut the door—I fled like a hare before his advancing footsteps—gained my own little bedroom—bolted the door, and climbed upon a great old chest that stood in the window.

The procession of St. Nicholas! I had witnessed such, and remembered every detail. There were priests, and emblems, and hundreds of smiling children, and streets crowded with gazers as they went by. All this I knew—all this I had seen and wondered at with breathless delight many and many a time, without dreaming that I should

ever be called upon to take a part in those ceremonies. And now, to be compelled at so brief a notice to show myself through all the streets of the town in an old, soiled, tumbled frock For the first time in my life I felt the sting of wounded vanity, and burst into tears.

I tormented myself by fancying the scornful glances of my companions—the remarks of the bystanders—the jeers of some, and the compassion, harder still to bear, of others; and thus, alternately sobbing and muttering in my passion of impotent anger, I crouched by the window till the evening gloom closed in, and the pale moonlight outlined the shadows of the old stanchions along the floor.

Then, utterly spent and sick at heart, I crept into bed, only to weep the more. It was a miserable night—feverish and crossed by troubled dreams; but I fell towards morning into a heavy sleep, from which I was aroused by my father's voice outside my door.

"Get up, Natalie! get up! It is late, and you have to go out with me to-day!"

I was awake in a moment, and recollected all. The time was past for tears now, though my pillow was still damp with those shed in my dreams. A cold, heavy resignation had succeeded to the violence of the preceding evening, and, half stupified, I proceeded to dress. The unfortunate white frock lay across the foot of the bed, creased, torn, and splashed in many places. I scarcely looked at it. I would not have washed away one stain, or smoothed one fold of it for a kingdom. My eyes were heavy and red; my cheeks and lips white; my hair disordered.

"What matter?" I said, bitterly, and half aloud. "The uglier the better. No one will look at me."

I gathered my hair carelessly back; I fastened the frock awry, and left it so. I took an ironical pleasure in making the worst of my appearance, and in revenging upon myself the meanness of my clothing. It was a paltry and an impatient feeling. I despised myself for it, and, as a natural

consequence where self-discipline is wanting, strove to reconcile my self-love and my fault by casting the blame upon another.

"I am very wicked," I said to myself. "I am very wicked; but it is my father's fault that I am so!"

This sophistry but half convinced me, so, at war with my heart and my better judgment, I sullenly finished dressing, and was just turning to leave the room when a footstep outside, a hand upon the door, and the tones of a kindly voice, arrested me. It was Madame Kehrli.

"Good morning, Natalie! I have come to help you, child; for we must try and make you look nicely to-day, since you are to walk in the procession of the holy St. Nicholas! Why, dear Virgin! how pale the sweet lamb is this blessed morning! What is the matter, little one?"

"Nothing," I replied, looking down, and tapping waywardly with my foot upon the ground.

"Something, something, Natalie! Dear! how hot your hands are, and how faint you look. Have you breakfasted yet?"

"I don't want any breakfast."

"No breakfast! Nonsense! you must eat, little one. See, here are some rice cakes I have brought in my pocket for you; and here a pretty little lace cap; and here a bunch of violets and spring flowers to carry in your hand! Why, we will make you so pretty that you won't know yourself. Tut! let me brush your hair for you, and we'll see if we cannot find a sash or a piece of ribbon to tie round your waist. You cannot have looked in the glass this morning, Natalie!"

"My hair will do well enough," I said, drawing back with an ungracious air, which, to speak truth, was more than half assumed. "I don't care how I look, and I don't want to go."

"But you must go, my honeybird, and so, you know, you may as well look as neat as we can make you. Come, sit down and eat a cake while I put your cap on! There now! How pretty that looks, to be sure!"

The cap was very becoming, and the rice-cake smelt

deliciously; I felt my ill-humour oozing away in spite of me. Involuntarily I tasted, and involuntarily I smiled. Madame Kehrli clapped her hands for joy; smoothed my tangled locks; arranged the folds of my poor frock; pinned some flowers in my belt; placed the rest in my hand; and so led me into the room where my father was waiting.

"Here, neighbour—here is your little Natalie!"

My father was standing with his back to us, and his hat on, and the never-failing pipe at his lips. He turned round quickly at these words, and stared sourly at her, without vouchsafing any reply.

He was an odd man. He never could take a kindness as it was meant, and hated to be obliged by any one.

"Will you have any breakfast, child?" he asked roughly, pointing to the table.

I shook my head, and slipped the last of the rice-cakes into my pocket. He would have been still more annoyed had he known this part of the business, and I acted accordingly.

"Come, then. It is eight o'clock, and we ought to be at the church now."

He took me by the hand in a loose, uncomfortable, sort of way, and hurried down-stairs, without so much as saying "good morning" to poor Madame Kehrli, who stood looking after us as we went up the street, and returned my nods and backward glances as long as we were in sight.

The morning was grey and dreary. A damp mist from the mountains hung over the town and hid the landscape beyond. My father took long, swift steps, and I ran shivering beside him. However, my ill-humour was past, and, in spite of the bleak morning, I felt better and happier. What weather is so bitter as the bitterness of anger—what sunshine so welcome as smiles after tears? For all this I did not feel entirely at peace. There was a conscious shame lying at my heart that made me restless and uneasy; and, do what I would, I could not shake it off.

The church doors were wide open, and Meister Kappeler was standing in the porch, just under the dreadful carving, as we came up. He wore his black robe and silver chain,

and carried his wand in his hand, and looked quite stately and imposing. Now, Meister Kappeler sometimes came to smoke a pipe at our fireside in that gloomy room over the dark arch of the Water-Gate. He was the only visitor my father ever admitted; the only friend my father had—if so grim and frosty an intercourse could be called friendship at all. But to-day my father was out of sorts, and moodier than usual; so he just pushed me towards the verger; nodded hastily; pulled his hat down lower over his eyes, and strode away without once looking back.

Meister Kappeler stared at me from beneath his bushy eyebrows, and rubbed his chin thoughtfully with the silver knob upon the end of his wand.

"Procession?" said he, interrogatively.

"If you please, sir," I replied, with a timid little curtsey, and a side glance at the dragon and devils over head.

Meister Kappeler stared at me again—this time from head to foot, and very slowly. Then he rubbed his chin again, and then he said "Oh!" I turned very red, and then very pale, and then very red again. I understood him well enough; and when he pointed up a dark corridor to the right, and bade me go straight along there and enter by the first door I came to, I was thankful to slip away out of his sight.

Up the dark corridor I went, and stopped before the door. It was a green baize door, studded with brass nails—I remember it as well as possible—and inside I heard a smothered sound of many voices, all speaking together. Listening more attentively, I found that they were repeating a litany of the saints, and, judging by the body of sound, it seemed to me that there must be hundreds of children within. I did not dare to go there alone; but stood outside shivering with cold and fear, and listening to the throbbings of my own frightened heart.

Presently a young lady came down the passage, leading a little child—a tiny radiant creature, rosy and smiling as an angel, with a wreath of white flowers on her golden head, and a waxen taper unlighted in her hand. The young lady paused at the door, and looked at me. She

had large kind brown eyes, and her voice was very gentle.

"What are you doing here, little girl?" she said to me.

I looked down. I felt ready to cry, and I could not speak.

"Are you waiting to go in? Are you afraid to go in alone?"

Still looking down, I murmured "Yes."

She smiled, and held out her white hand to me. Mine looked so brown as I put it forward, that I partly drew it back again. I felt so far beneath her, and so meanly dressed, and, beholding the calm goodness of her face, became suddenly so stricken with the remembrance of my own wicked, wilful burst of passion, that I stood quite still and trembling, and felt the tears steal slowly down my cheeks.

The young lady knelt down and kissed me, and dried my eyes with her own handkerchief, and spoke words of such sweet comfort to me that I ceased weeping, and laid my weary head upon her shoulder with the quick confidence of childhood. And all this time the cherub stood by with an unwonted gravity upon her face, and a world of timid wonder in her great blue eyes.

"Now, little girl," said the young lady, as she rose from her knees and smoothed my hair back with her two soft hands—"now, little girl, you must tell me your name, and why you are alone, and what made you so frightened just now, and so sad.

"My name is Natalie Metz," I answered. "I live at the Water-Gate, and my father left me here. I was frightened because old Kappeler stared at me so, and because there are so many voices in there—and—and——"

"And what else, my child?"

"And because—because I am afraid they will be unkind to me when they see my dirty frock."

The lady looked down rapidly at my dress. It was evidently the first time she had noticed it, and this somewhat consoled me. A lovely expression of compassion passed over her face; and loosening a scarf from round her

neck—a beautiful silken thing, with threads of silver gleaming here and there—she placed it on my shoulders, tied it in such a manner as best to conceal the dress beneath, and saying gently—

“Wear this, dear, and keep it always in remembrance of to-day,” led me through the dreaded door, and seated me beside her own child on a large form amongst some hundreds of others.

Having once placed us there in safety, and having seen a young priest come up and begin instructing us in the formula of the Litany, the lady kissed us both once more, and retired. Not, however, before I had tried to stammer forth some broken words of gratitude; whereupon she laid her hand lightly over my lips, desired me to breathe no syllable of it to any one, and glided away. Glided away, as it were, into the great Future; for never in this life have I seen her face again!

My heart was full of joy, and love, and astonishment. I felt so humbled, and yet so much happier than before. It was the deepest lesson I had yet learnt, and it did me more good than any, perhaps, that Fortune ever read me since.

The room was lofty and large, with whitewashed walls, and great presses all along one side, and a huge black crucifix at the upper end. The centre was filled with rows of deal benches, between which some dozen priests kept walking backwards and forwards, leading the children in their recitation. Presently I heard one of the elder girls whisper that this room was the *vestiaire*, and that in those wardrobes were stored the rich velvet stoles worn by the priests on important holidays.

The Litany was soon learnt. Nothing could be easier. It was always the same formula, and only the name of the saint differed each time. Still we seemed to get no farther, and when we had arrived at the end, went back again to the very beginning; and this over and over again, till the measured voices fell drearily upon my ear, and the words passed my lips mechanically, and my head swam. I had spent a troubled night, eaten no fitting breakfast, and now began

to feel so faint and confused that, had not the signal been given at that precise moment, and a general stir and rising been the consequence, I think I should soon have been carried from the room.

Out we went into the aisles of the great church. The doors were closed now, and the sunlight came streaming down in patches of purple and orange upon the pavement. There were none present save the children and the priests, and up near the altar were piled stands of little flags, white, and pink, and pale blue; heavy banners painted and fringed; a quantity of gilt emblems; and a forest of artificial lilies. These they distributed amongst us. To the best dressed they gave gilt lambs and mystic hearts, or keys lying upon velvet cushions. To the rest, the little flags and paper lilies. My baby companion got an image of the Virgin dressed in green satin, and a crown of pearl-beads; whilst I received a small banner with gold fringe. They then formed us into the order of procession, two and two, and matched us in size as nearly as possible. By this arrangement I lost my little friend, and was placed beside a dark, pale girl, who scarcely opened her lips to me. Then the chief priests came out from a side door, dressed in their glorious robes, and carrying the sacramental cups and shrined relics in their hands; then the acolytes in scarlet and white, with the steaming censers hanging to their wrists; and, lastly, the great canopy of blue and silver, beneath which the bishop took his place. He was a white-headed old man, dressed in a long robe of amber brocade, and carried the host reverently in his hands.

It took a long time, even so, to marshal us as we were to walk; but at length all was completed; the church-doors were once more thrown open; the organ began to play; the monotonous litanies were commenced afresh; and now we really were in motion.

Out into the fresh sweet air; out into the sunshine, and along the streets crowded with spectators and hung with flags at almost every window!

We trod on green leaves, and field-flowers, and boughs

of fern and lilac all the way. I had seen the women scattering them down the middle of the roads as we came in the early morning, but had scarcely remarked it at the time. Many persons had placed images and rows of lighted candles in their windows; and there were little altars erected here and there at the corners of the principal streets, where the procession halted, and the priests chanted a brief canticle. The people all knelt down, too, as we passed; and every now and then a little bell was rung, and the bishop elevated the host, and we all stopped and prostrated ourselves in silence on the pavement.

And this for hours; for we went so slowly, oh! so slowly, and we paused so often and so long. And ever the monotonous litany, and the overpowering steam of the incense, and the heavy flapping of the banners, over and over and over again, till brain, and limbs, and eyes grew faint and weary!

It must have been, I think, about half-past two o'clock in the day when I first began to remark the pale cheeks and vacillating steps of the young girl who walked beside me. She seemed scarce able to keep her place in the ranks, and though I felt miserably tired and hungry myself, I saw that she was still more tired, and, possibly, still more hungry. I remembered the rice-cake in my pocket, and after looking round to see if any of the priests were observing me, broke it furtively in two, and offered her one half. My first impulse had been to give her all; but it looked so good, and I was so faint, and, withal, I was such a child, that I could not resist the temptation. I felt ashamed of it, however, as soon as I had done it, and was on the point of placing my own piece in her hands, when she put the other back, and said, with a languid gesture of the head, "It is of no use, thank you. I cannot eat it."

"Why not?" I exclaimed. "You seem to want something."

"So I do," she replied; "but I cannot bear the sight of it. I don't think I can go much farther."

Her lips quivered as she spoke, and she caught at my shoulder for support. The expression of her face alarmed me.

"I'm sure you are very ill," I cried. "Why don't you tell one of the priests, and go home?"

"I dare not."

"Let me, then," said I, bravely. "I am not afraid."

She looked at me gratefully, but made no reply. Just at that moment we halted; the bell rang; the host was uplifted; I helped her to kneel down, and with a beating heart and trembling limbs, which sufficiently gave the lie to my boasted courage, stepped through the kneeling lines, and stood before the nearest priest. If I had been frightened when only standing at the door of the *vestiaire*, I was ten times more frightened now. The priest was kneeling, and his eyes were bent upon his breviary. He looked up sternly, and, seeing me about to speak, laid his finger upon his lip. Presently every one rose, and he turned towards me.

"What do you want, and why have you left your place?"

"The—the little girl—the little girl next to me—" I began falteringly.

"What of her? Where is she?"

A stir in the direction I had left—a sudden crowding up—a buzz of voices, and the words, "She is fainting!" "There is a child ill!" interrupted me, as I was about to answer. I forgot my terrors in a moment; darted from his side, and struggling into the midst of those who had gathered round her, found her lying like one dead.

The priest came striding up, and lifted her in his arms as if she had been a feather.

"Who is this child?" said he, looking round. "Does any person know where she lives?"

He repeated the question twice or thrice. At last an old woman stepped forward, and said that her name was Hannchen, and she lived with her mother at the corner of the fruit-market. She offered to lead the way, and a tall youth, who had borne a banner in the procession,

undertook to carry her. For my part, I slipped unnoticed out of the ranks, leaving my flag in the hands of a bystander, and followed them. Down some narrow lanes and turnings, past the Place des Tilleuls, and on into the empty fruit-market we went, with a trail of idle stragglers behind us. At the corner house we stopped and knocked. Then the door opened—there was a cry of fear and anguish within—the young man and the old woman entered with their senseless burden—the door closed hastily upon them, and there was no more to see.

Like the rest, I lingered for a few minutes, and then turned to go home. It was now between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, and I had been out fasting, walking, and reciting for more than seven hours. I had a dreadful headache, and felt far from well; and, as I passed along the street leading to the Water-Gate, I heard Otto König, the cooper, say to his wife:—

“See, there goes little Natalie! The child looks like a ghost.”

My father was out when I got home, and the place was very dark and silent. Some meat and bread had been left upon the table for me; but, like Hannechen, I felt a disgust for food, and too tired to do anything but rest. So I went into my own little closet and laid down upon the bed, dressed as I was, and tried to sleep, but could not. A fiery band seemed bound around my brow; every limb ached. I still heard the hateful litanies in my ears, and still smelt the sickly perfume from the censers. By and bye my thoughts wandered wearily back to the procession, as if I were dreaming. Then it turned quite dark, and then the moonlight came; and still I dreamt, and still it was always the procession, and the banners, and the long streets, and the monotonous litanies over and over and over again! Once or twice I was aware of my father's voice, and of a strong light; but that was when I first began to dream, and not during the stagnant, dark, and weary time which followed, and which seemed to endure for an eternity.

CHAPTER V.

CONVALESCENCE.

WAKING up one day from a deep sleep, I find the sun shining brightly into the room, and a woman dozing over her knitting close beside my bed. She sits in an old-fashioned, high-backed chair covered with yellow chintz. Her features are perfectly familiar to me, and yet I cannot remember to whom they belong. A curious, indifferent sort of indolence possesses me, and I find myself wondering vaguely who she may be; and yet closing my eyes every now and then, as if it were too much trouble to keep them open for many minutes together. In this way I fall asleep again without knowing it, but only, it would seem, for a few minutes; since, on waking, I find her still dozing and in the same position.

Outside, I hear the swallows twittering gaily, and the Saarine dashing against the covered bridge. It is pleasant to listen, and lie thus. Pleasanter still to watch the sunlight creeping along the walls, and to count the buds on that white rose-tree outside the casement. The white rose-tree! Why, how came it there? I remember no rose-tree when I fell asleep! But when did I fall asleep? Surely it must be a long time since. Ah, well! I am much too weary to think of that now; so I close my eyes again, and listen to the old song of the river; and then it occurs to me, all at once, that I am very hungry.

This reflection wakes me up thoroughly, and I try to raise myself in the bed; but find, to my astonishment, that I have no power to do so. Then it strikes me, for the first time, that I must have been ill!—then I remember the fête day, the procession, and that ghostly continuation of it that traversed my dreams and seemed to last intolerably and for ever. And then I suddenly recollect that the sleeping woman is my old friend Madame Kehrli, and, in a very feeble voice, call to her by her name.

She does not hear me the first time, nor the second. At

the third she starts up, and, seeing me awake and smiling, runs to the bedside, utters an exclamation of delight, and nearly smothers me with kisses.

"What, my little one, do you know me? Are you better? Now, the dear Virgin be praised! here is joyful news for the father!"

"Have I been very ill, Madame Kehrli?"

"Ill! yes, indeed—almost dying, little one! But don't let us talk of that now—let us talk of your getting well again."

"If you please, Madame Kehrli," I observe, timidly, "I should like something to eat."

"Something to eat! Bless the dear lamb, she shall have it. Something to eat, indeed!"

And, as if to be hungry were the most praiseworthy of acts, Madame Kehrli embraces me again, and asks me breathlessly what I should like to have? Would I fancy preserved apples? or almond cakes? or chicken jelly? or prunes stewed in wine? or ——? But I interrupt her catalogue by choosing the chicken-jelly; and finding it very good, inquire languidly whence it came, and if all those other rarities be really here. Then I learn that they were sent by Madame de Wald; that Madame de Wald has been to the house herself once, and sometimes twice, in every day; but without daring to see me, lest she should carry the fever back to Louis; that her own doctor is attending me, and that Madame Kehrli, being paid by her, and having left her shop in the charge of a married sister, is here doing duty as my nurse, and will remain by me, please the dear Virgin, till I am well enough to go into the country!

Into the country! Does Madame Kehrli mean to old Jacques Oetiker's? Madame Kehrli means nothing less. Jacques Oetiker's nephew, Laurent, has been up nearly every day to hear of my progress, and my father has promised that I shall go there as soon as I am well enough to bear the removal.

I am by this time very sleepy again, and have heard enough news for one day; so I drop into a sweet and

peaceful slumber, and dream deliciously of the Chalet in the Vale.

Thus three pleasant weeks go by—three of the happiest of my life. Every one is indulgent to me. Even my father relaxes somewhat of his distant gravity, and brings me picture-books from a stall close by. Laurent comes twice or thrice a week with flowers and fresh eggs, and other country delicacies; and when I am strong enough to see him, plays at cards with me on the side of the bed, and constructs all kinds of cunning things for me, bridges, houses, and regiments, with a piece of paper and a pair of scissors. Madame supplies me with books, which I eagerly devour; and with savoury trifles, which I devour no less eagerly. Soon, I have gained strength enough to sit up to dinner, and by and bye I contrive to remain dressed for several hours in the middle of the day. At length the doctor says that I may be removed, and that country air and country fare will do more for me than his art. So Madame sends her own carriage to convey me; and wrapped, one day, in many shawls, and supported by pillows, I ride triumphantly out of Fribourg, with Madame Kehrli smiling on the opposite seat, and Laurent sitting on the box beside the coachman.

But, passing thus out of the town, a sudden remembrance comes to me, and a question, never thought of till this moment, rises to my lips.

“What has become of Hannchen? Is she well also?”

Madame Kehrli shakes her head, and an uneasy expression flits across her face.

Hannchen is dead.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BOY DREAMER.

"No, little Natalie; not Berchtold of Berne! Try again."

"I cannot. I have guessed ever so many, and none of them were right. Indeed, I don't remember about anybody else. Do tell me who it is, please, Laurent!"

"Sit down then, little Natalie, and leave off eating cherries for five minutes, and perhaps I will tell you."

This was said with that air of important seniority that fifteen years are privileged to assume over eleven. Eleven obeyed at once, and I sat down with my cherries in my lap, listening earnestly.

"Don't you see, little Natalie," said Laurent, still carving away at the head of the tiny wooden figure, and speaking in that slow and absent tone into which people fall when absorbed in work,—“Don't you see, little Natalie, that this warrior of mine is wounded and staggering; that he carries a broken sword in his right hand, and in his left waves a——What is it he waves in his left, Natalie?”

"Well," I replied, doubtfully, "it—it looks something like a feather. Is it a feather, Laurent?"

"A feather! Nonsense. It's a branch, as you will see presently, when I begin to cut the leaves more clearly. A branch torn from a lime-tree, Natalie. Can't you guess it now?"

A lime-tree! I knew no story about a lime-tree, and I said so. Laurent almost laid down his tools in surprise.

"What! you a little Fribourgeoise, and know nothing of the story of the great lime-tree in the Place des Tilleuls! The great tree planted on the day of the Battle of Morat, hundreds of years ago! Why, it was a young soldier, Natalie—a soldier of Fribourg—brave as a lion and wounded to the death, who came running home with the tidings—running, and shedding his heart's blood as he ran. And he got there, Natalie;—got there with a lime-

branch in his hand, just in time to cry out 'Victory!' and die. They planted the bough where he sank down, and it grew to a great tree and stands there still, where you must have seen it every day!"

"Yes; I know it well. It is so old that they have built stone pillars to support the branches."

"But think of the beautiful story, Natalie! Oh, I should like to be a soldier!"

"I hope you won't be a soldier, Laurent," I said, plucking the moss away from the roots of the tree beneath which we were sitting;—"you—you might be killed, you know."

"But to die so, Natalie—to die so!" exclaimed the boy, with flushed face and glittering eyes. "To be remembered for centuries after—to be written about in history, and have the tale of one's courage told by winter firesides—to have, perhaps, a stone statue over one's tomb in the cathedral, or on the fountain in the market-place! Yes, yes, that's worth dying for!"

"But I live in Fribourg, and I never heard the story of the Lime-branch."

The simple comment struck him. He looked grave, and remained silent for several minutes.

"Perhaps you are right, Natalie," he said, sighing. "But I must be famous somehow or another. I feel that I shall be, by and bye. Tell me, dear, what shall I do to get the statue over my tomb?"

"Carve it yourself, Laurent, and tell the people to put it there."

He laughed at first, calling this "a wise expedient," but presently returned to the subject, though addressing himself less to me than to his own thoughts.

"I have no father or mother, you see," said he, resting his chin thoughtfully upon his hand, and letting the little warrior roll down unheeded on the grass. "I have not even a remembrance of either, and though uncle Jacques is very good to me, and very fond of me, it wouldn't exactly break his heart if I did go right away some day and seek my fortune. They say there is a fortune for

everybody, only some people never find it, and some never even go out to look for it. I feel something within that leads me on to better things than these, Natalie—something higher and stronger—something that is always striving at my heart and can't find utterance. I don't know what it is; sometimes I think it is one thing, and sometimes another, but all is dark to me at present. I suppose it's because I am nothing but a poor ignorant lad, that the voice of my own soul is strange and unintelligible to me; but I do know that I have ambition, and patience, and courage, and that that which lifts up my heart, and makes me hear and see a thousand things to which those around me are insensible, is dearer to me than any feeling else, and will be my fortune by and bye, when it pleases God to let me labour for it."

There was a sort of stern enthusiasm about Laurent that awed and silenced me, and so I sat by quite still and mute, watching the light in his dark eyes.

"I see such changing colours in the sky," he went on, "such curious forms in the clouds, such odd outlines and shadows in the landscape, that I often fancy I am intended for a painter. Sometimes that ridge of trees, now, along the summit of yonder hill, looks to me like a ruined castle; sometimes, when the sun sets just behind it, like a marching army, and the fir-tops glitter like bristling spears; sometimes, towards dusk on an autumn afternoon, like a dreary funeral train; and then the wind moans through the valley, like the blast of a melancholy trumpet, and the trees shake down their withered leaves, like the locks of hair which, as I have read, were thrown upon the funeral pyres by the ancient people of Greece."

He paused, still in the same attitude, and then resumed his musings. It was strange how fragmentary were his sentences, yet all tending to the same end; as a stream, agitated by many currents and interrupted by green islands, yet sets onward ever to the sea.

"It seems different to me, according to my different moods," he said; "colours could not paint the dreams I dream, or tell the thoughts that I should want to tell.

This makes me think, again, that if I were only educated enough to write that which I find within me, I could be an author,—perhaps a poet; why, I hear rhymes and stories in the night-winds, and I listen sometimes to the silence till it seems to grow musical! Natalie, I cannot, will not spend all my life down in this valley, keeping cows and bees, and carving wooden bowls, and dying, dying of the fruitless longings that eat away my heart! I've tried to be contented, and I *am* grateful.—God knows I am grateful for the kindness and the home they give me; but it's of no use—I can't stay here always—I can't stay here always!"

He started up as he said this, and paced backwards and forwards in his agitation; and still I sat by, silent and awed, for I could find no words to calm him.

At that moment a clear, single, solitary note reverberated along the air, and then died away upon the evening stillness of the valley. Laurent stood as if struck suddenly to stone, and, when all was once more quiet, drew a deep breath and passed his hand twice or thrice across his brow.

"It is the herdsman's horn," he said, in reply to my look of inquiry. "He sounds that note before driving the cattle down into the valley for the night. If there were another herdsman within hearing he would answer it, and another would answer him, and so their good-night might travel, and sometimes does travel, for miles across the country. But that reminds me that it is getting late, dear, and that my patient must not breathe the evening mist. Come, Natalie, it is time we went home."

And so we go home, hand in hand, through the gathering shadows, and neither of us speak by the way. We are met at the door by dear old Jacques, and sitting down to a little cosy supper of brown bread, cream-cheese, and honey, go afterwards to bed by no other light than that of the full moon.

And I am very wakeful that night, and lie there for hours in my little room, thinking of the ardent boy, and of the dreams which fill his restless and impatient heart.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST OF JULY.

THIS calm pastoral life did wonders for me. I gained strength daily, and soon found myself able to take long strolls in the forest, and even to climb, with Laurent, to the "Elfin Stuhl"—a fragment of mossy stone, shaped like an arm-chair, and imbedded on the brow of a steep slope overhanging the valley. Here Laurent brought his tools and carvings, or read aloud to me the wild legends of our native land; and here, too, he has often related to me some tale of patriotism and devotion, till his voice grew thick and his eyes dim, and he could only break off suddenly, and sit looking over the peaceful landscape in a silence more moving than words. Then would the warm light of the dreamy afternoon show more goldenly along the cornfields, and the shadows lengthen behind the trees. A light mist would gather over the purple distance, and lie, like a faint bloom, in the mountain hollows; and gentle evening sounds would come stealing up from the farmhouses in the valley. Then crept away the glow from hillside and treetop. Brown shadows gathered over the forest, and the steely brightness died off from the winding river. Far away the grey earth seemed to blend with the grey sky, and at last the dropping sun left vale and plain in darkness, and only the snowy summits of the Simmenthal were uplifted in a flush of latest glory, which hung about them as the golden circle hangs about the heads of white-haired saints in the old mediæval paintings of Giotto and Cimabue. At other times we used to go down amongst the haymakers in the meadows, and there I lay idly on the sweet grass and listened to the young girls chanting in chorus the long legendary ballads common to the district—the ballad of Rudolph of Erlach, who was hunted to the death by bloodhounds—the ballad of Saint Verena, who was near being carried off by the devil—and the ballad about Queen Bertha of Burgundy, who built the

old church of Peterlingen, and spun as she rode upon horseback. As morning and evening came round I fed the poultry, and went to see the milking, and sometimes got a ride upon cowback.

And thus passed the happy, happy time, as I was recovering from the fever which I caught at the Fête of St. Nicholas ; and it really was not surprising that the first of July came round before I knew it. The first day of beautiful sunny July, when the scarlet rhododendron bursts into blossom on the mountain-side, and the lowest snow-tracts, which have hitherto lain in little drifts among the fissures and sheltered hollows of the Alps, begin to wink and waver, and yield in tiny streams to the fiat of the sun.

I had been for three weeks at the chalet, and three weeks had glided by like three days. I should not have known it then, only that I saw the cows driven out in the early morning, and heard Jacques Oetiker say that they were bound for the upper pasturages and would not be down again for twelve or thirteen weeks—and then I knew that it must be July, and I sighed ; for I felt assured that I should not long be left without a summons back to Fribourg. It was therefore no surprise to me, but rather the fulfilment of an expectation, when, on the afternoon of the same day, I saw Madame de Wald's carriage coming along the valley.

But it *was* a surprise to me—a great surprise—when, instead of Madame Kehrli, or my father, or any of her own servants, Madame de Wald herself alighted from the carriage, and came towards the door of the house !

Frantic with joy, I ran to meet her. I kissed her hands, and the corner of her shawl. I could have knelt down and pressed my lips to the hem of her garment ! She took me in her arms and embraced me tenderly. There was an unusual sadness and gravity upon her face as she did so, and though I stammered some incoherent words of rapturous welcome, she made no reply ; but took my hand in hers, and, turning to old Jacques, who stood reverently bowing on the threshold of his dwelling, said—

"I have come to take my little Natalie home to Fribourg, good Meister Oetiker, and to thank you for all your care of her. Can you spare her to me, think you?"

"I—I am sorry to part from her, gracious lady," said Jacques, pushing his spectacles up above his eyebrows, and rubbing his hands nervously upon his apron. "Will your ladyship be pleased to walk in?"

Madame, still keeping my hand, passed into the large room and sat down.

Strange, that she should be so silent, so absent, so unlike herself! At any other time she would have spoken to all—would have been cheerful and affable—would not, certainly, have suffered the old man to remain standing before her in his own house!

He looks at me surprised, and from me to Madame's pre-occupied face and downcast eyes. I can only look at him wonderingly in return. Presently she starts—appears to recollect herself—and saying, with a faint blush—

"I crave your pardon, Meister Oetiker—I beseech you, be seated," turns towards me again, kisses me once more upon the forehead, and bids me go upstairs and get ready.

So I obey her, and set about making my preparations as rapidly as possible. Madame is talking now, and that both earnestly and fast. Every now and then Jacques utters an exclamation or a question, and their voices are subdued, but eager. I am so grieved to think of the parting near at hand—so sorry to leave my little bedroom, with its rose-trees and white curtains; and have, moreover, such difficulty in keeping down that rebellious choking in the throat which threatens every minute to master me, that I scarcely remark these things at the time; but, going down stairs a few minutes after, I observe them break off suddenly.

Jacques and Madame have both risen, and are standing near the window. His manner is more nervous than ever. Laurent, too, is pale and excited, and whispers hurriedly, "Don't forget me, dear!"

Forget him! The phrase fills me with a vague alarm.

I am seized with a painful fluttering at the heart, and when Madame says, "Now let us go, Natalie," I feel that I can scarcely breathe.

One kiss from Laurent, and one from Jacques, and then I am lifted into the carriage beside Madame. Jacques stands by the step with his head uncovered and his hand upon the door.

"You will let our little girl come sometimes to see us, gracious lady?" he says, with the tears in his kind eyes.

"Often, good Meister Oetiker; often," replies Madame, drawing up the glasses.

The horses move on, impatient for the road—Laurent turns hastily away—Jacques stands by the old water-trough, waving his hand and looking after us to the last—and in another minute chalet and all are out of sight, and there is only the dense forest to be seen at either side.

Only the dense forest for a mile or more. Then a break in the trees—a few fields—a cross road with a sign-post—a blacksmith's shed—a farm-house, and one or two scattered cottages, and then the forest again. It is getting dusk now, even in the open country, and here, surrounded only by dark trees, it is very sombre. Then some rain falls, and the air grows chill. There is something, too, in Madame's reserve—in the glance which she gave me just now—in this silent, solitary evening drive, that weighs upon my heart like a sorrowful hand, and forces the tears to my eyes. Shrinking back into the dark corner, I let them flow silently; but though Madame neither speaks nor turns, I feel she is observing me, and so overcome them at last, and sit there with my eyes closed.

When I open them again it is very dusk, and we are upon the heights north of Fribourg. Down in the misty hollow lies the town, with faint lights gleaming out here and there, and the shadowy cathedral-spire high above all; yet ghostly and shrouded, like a spectral monk with his cowl on.

At a quick trot, now, down the slanting road fringed with fruit-trees and gardens! Will the horses take the way to the Water-Gate? No—they turn towards the

suspension-bridge, which creaks, and falls, and rises, with every blow of their hoofs as we go over.

"You are coming home with me, Natalie," says Madame, speaking for the first time since we left the chalet.

Onward now, faster and faster, past the great Zayringen Hotel, and through the steep streets leading down to the Basse Ville. The mist is very thick here. The lights in the shop windows have little haloes round them. It rains fast, and a brawling gutter runs down the middle of the road. The church bells sound sad and muffled. They are ringing for the evening performance; and a little party of strangers, hurrying along in travelling cloaks and shawls, are following a guide up to St. Nicholas, and shivering as they go.

Now a line of dark wall—an open gate—a sharp turn, and we rattle across the paved courtyard, stop suddenly before the door, and are welcomed by Louis, who comes running out in the rain to meet us.

Then we pass into the library—it is now nearly three months since I last stood there!—and find a blazing fire, which, although it be the first of July, both looks and feels cheerful this wet evening.

Louis, even Louis, is quiet to-night! He stands by me, however, and takes my hand, and seems very fond of me; but not in his own old boisterous way. The very servants are constrained, and Gertrud sighs when she asks if I am better, and calls me "Mademoiselle."

Then there is a long blank interval when no one speaks. I begin to fear that some misfortune has fallen on the house, and look round timidly, half fearing to miss some old familiar face. So it is quite a relief when Madame presently takes a candle from the table, and says—

"Come, Natalie. I think we will go upstairs."

I follow Madame up the broad stone staircase, and into her own sumptuous bedchamber. Out of her bedchamber opens her dressing-closet, and beyond her dressing-closet another small room, in which she keeps her account books, writing-table, papers, &c., and which she calls her "retreat."

Through bedchamber and dressing-closet, up to the door of this "retreat," she preceded me. Then she paused, looked steadily into my eyes, and opening the door, said—
"Natalie, my child, this is your little bedroom."

My little bedroom! It was a mystery!

And how the place was altered! Writing-table, books, letter-files, all had disappeared, and in their place I saw a bedroom—a fairy bedroom, with pictures, and hanging shelves, and pretty toilet-ornaments, and rose-silk hangings; and, above all, a little portrait of Madame herself hanging in a gilt frame over the fireplace, just where I should see it on first waking!

Too much amazed to say anything, I could only stand still and look around me.

"See," said Madame, leading me about the room, "these are your books—my present to you. Here are travels, and biographies, and poetry, and a few volumes of fairy-tales. In this wardrobe you will keep your dresses, and your linen in this chest of drawers. Upon this little table in the window stands your desk. Open it. It is stocked, you see, with pens and paper, and your initials are engraved on the lid. These things are all your own, Natalie, and this is your home. Take care of all that is given to you. Never conceal anything from me, and always be the same loving and obedient child that I have ever proved you."

"Mine, Madame! My room!—my desk!"

Still very gravely and sadly she made a gesture of assent, and still she kept looking at me.

"But my father—" I stammered. "Will he does he am I never to go back and live in the Water-Gate?"

"Come and sit down beside me on the bed, my dear child," said Madame. "I have something to tell you."

So I went over and sat beside her, and she put both her arms around me, and drew my head to her bosom. Madame had never shown such tenderness for me before!

"Natalie, you are going to live with me, and be my child for the future," said she, gently. "You will never,

never go back to live in the Water-Gate. The Water-Gate is not the same home for you that it was, Natalie."

She paused, as if to let me take in the meaning of her words, and, after a moment, went on—

"There is no one living in the Water-Gate now, dear. It is quite empty and shut up."

The Water-Gate shut up! I started and half withdrew from her embrace.

"What, Madame!" I said, amazed. "Is my father gone away?"

"Yes, dear; your father is gone away. Gone very far away—where you cannot follow him."

Here she drew my head back again to its first resting-place, and, bending hers caressingly towards me, so that I felt her breath stir the hair upon my brow, and dared not move for fear she should move also, thus continued,—

"You had a bad fever, my poor little girl—a bad, contagious fever, and ought to be very grateful to the good God who has made you well again. Many persons caught that fever, Natalie, in our town—grown men and women, as well as children."

Again that ominous fluttering at the heart—again that catching of the breath, I knew not why or wherefore.

"Natalie, my child—do you not understand me?"

Yes! I did understand her now—or thought I understood her.

"Oh, Madame! papa has the fever!"

"No, dear,—not now. He has had it; but it is over, Natalie. It is over!"

"And *he* also has gone into the country to get well! And that's why the Water-Gate is shut up! Is he getting well, Madame?"

I jumped up in my childish impatience and clapped my hands. I was so glad he was gone into the country to get well! An expression of sharp pain crossed Madame's face, and she sighed heavily.

"Natalie," she said, almost in a whisper—"Natalie—you caught the fever from Hannchen Schmidt—did she recover?"

A sudden darkness before my eyes—a sudden stopping of my breath—the sound of my own inarticulate cry ringing in my ears—and then a burst of passionate weeping—this is all that I remember, till I found myself once more lying in Madame's arms, with her cheeks pressed close to mine, and her lips kissing away my tears as they fell.

She did not speak to me again for a long time. She let me weep on; and, when the first shock was somewhat abated, she resumed the subject.

"Natalie, my child," she said to me, "I am your mother now, and you are my little girl—remember that, dear. You have had a great loss—an irreparable loss, I own—but you still possess a home and many friends. Besides, dear, death, although it sounds terrible to one so young, is not the utter grief and desolation that, at first sight, we take it to be. Death——"

"Oh, no!" I cried, sobbing afresh, and shuddering convulsively—"not that word!—not that word!"

"And why not that word, dear? When first I heard it, I wept like you—I loathed it like you; but now it is sacred to me—sacred and beautiful, and hallows the memory of those who were my nearest and dearest. It is not because your father is no more that you should feel as if you had lost him for ever. Man is the seed for God's Paradise. When he dies, and his body is laid in the warm earth (where the little moles make their homes, and the little corn-grains germinate and strengthen), all fairest flowers and grasses spring from his dust, and the birds sing over his grave; but his soul, Natalie, his soul flowers also—buds and blossoms into a bright angel, and lives with God for ever. You will die one day, Natalie, and meet him again. You will die, and I shall die."

"Not you!—oh, not you!" I cried again, clasping her tightly in my arms, and looking up to her with streaming eyes. "Don't you die, and leave me too."

Her lips moved, but uttered no sound—she looked at me fixedly for a moment, and then I saw a single tear steal slowly down her cheek. She bent to me, kissed me, and,

laying my head on the pillow, drew a chair beside me, and said, soothingly :

"No, Natalie—I shall not die yet, dear. I am well. Now lie there patiently, for you are cold and weary. Try to stop crying, if you can, and give me your hand. So—that warm shawl over your feet, and the light shaded from your eyes. That's well, dear. Now I am going to read to you."

She takes a book from the shelf—gives me her hand again, which I hold closely against my lips, and bedew all over with my still-falling tears—draws the curtain before the candle, and begins reading aloud in a low and even voice, full of reverence, and gentleness, and divine compassion, that short Psalm beginning—"The Lord is my shepherd; therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture: and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort."

The words fall upon my ear sweetly and peacefully, like the chiming of Sabbath-bells; and when she has finished, I entreat her (falteringly still, but with more composure), to read another.

And so she begins another, and I listen to it in a sort of sad dream; for I am exhausted—worn out with sorrow, and not yet quite strong after my long illness. By and bye the words carry less meaning with them, and, though the turning of a leaf, or a brief pause in the recital, rouses me now and then from the apathy into which I am fast falling, I soon relapse again—am sensible only of a loving presence and a murmuring voice—sink away lower and lower into the under-world of darkness and dreams, and presently lose all consciousness in a profound and tearless sleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

GIRLHOOD.

THE first epoch of my life is told. There has been something wondrously sweet and sad to me in thus recalling the earliest impressions of my childhood. I have lingered lovingly over them; perhaps lingered too long; yet, friends for whom I transcribe these pages, I pray you pardon me; I have done with infancy now and for ever. The pictures vanish from the glass, and I shall summon them no more.

Let me, instead, sketch, in as few words as may be, the passage of that interval which lies between child-life and womanhood, and, "like a silver clasp, unites to-day with yesterday." That pleasant interval when the world is all new to us, and the serpent has not yet crept into the Paradise of our dreams—when each day brings its accession of knowledge—when we take books for men, and are more familiar with the thoughts of the dead than with the passions of the living—when nor ambition nor envy has shaken the sunshine-calm of our morning—when we look upon the Universal Future as no more than the unwritten continuation of universal history; and regard the deeds of living nations, the deaths of kings, and the revolutions of empires, with the same indifference as the successes of Cyrus, or the reverses of Imperial Rome. Youth, come hither! come, gentle and joyous as thou wert, and let me sum up thy brief and innocent story!

"The spring-tide blossoms on thy lips,
And tears take sunshine from thine eyes!"

My life at Madame de Wald's was very studious, very peaceable, very happy. I shared all advantages of education with her son, whence it arrived that I learnt many branches of knowledge not generally included within the narrow radius of woman's acquirements.

Louis and I were the best friends and playmates in the

world—that is to say, we were playmates for some time; but Louis, who was two years younger than myself, was still a boisterous, mischief-loving boy long after I began to exchange the merry games of childhood for the premature dignity of girlhood.

Not that this change influenced our affection for one another. Our tastes necessarily diverged. It was the inevitable consequence of inequality in age; yet did not our hearts on that account become alienated, or our happy brotherly and sisterly intercourse lose any of its cordiality. If I were too old, or fancied myself too old, at fourteen, to play marbles with him, or go through “terrific single combats” with wooden broadswords, we still enjoyed many amusements in common, and followed all our studies together. Thus, in the mornings we wrote our English and French exercises, construed Virgil, composed our essays on history, and worked some problems in Euclid. After that we would mount our ponies and have a gallop over the hills till dinner-time, or, perhaps, a drive in the carriage with Madame. In the evenings we were all together, and amused ourselves with music and conversation. Occasionally Monsieur Ziegler, a rich elderly bachelor living in the Upper Town, came in and played a game of piquet with Madame, after tea.

Monsieur Ziegler had been Monsieur de Wald’s oldest friend, and might almost be called Madame’s only visitor. He was very tall, very thin, very pompous, and possessed of strong prejudices. His tastes, however, were refined, and his mind was stored with obsolete facts, and odd scraps of reading—the result of a long life devoted to many pursuits and to much miscellaneous study.

Somehow or another, Monsieur Ziegler never was my friend. I was the object of one of his prejudices. My birth was mean, my father a mechanic, my position dependent; and one only of these disadvantages would have been, at any time, sufficient to exclude me from the good graces of Monsieur Ziegler. It was among his most cherished maxims that ingratitude and poverty went hand-in-hand, and that deceit was the invariable attendant upon low

birth. He had looked upon me with disfavour from the old time when I used to come thrice a week from my home in the Water-Gate, and years had done nothing for me; unless, indeed, the constant sight of me had deepened his first impression. Though he frequently examined our exercises, I don't think that Monsieur Ziegler ever bestowed a word of praise upon me in his life; and yet I know that seven times out of ten my books were the more correct.

Not that I had more talent than Louis; but I possessed more application and steadiness of character. He learnt rapidly and superficially; remembered only that which amused or interested him; lost patience where patience was most needed; was a careless writer and an impatient accountant; loved to try all things that came in his way; acquired with surprising readiness; and wearied of every study as soon as he had arrived at something like a comprehension of its general bearings. His versatility was extraordinary. He attempted all kinds of things, and succeeded in all, without ever having the constancy to excel in any.

But this has nothing to say to Monsieur Ziegler and his dislike of me. As I said before, I was one of his prejudices; and I suppose he could not help it any more than he could help certain other ineradicable opinions, equally comprehensive. Thus, he believed that no Frenchman could be sincere, and no Englishman well-bred; that *Corneille's* were the finest tragedies ever written; that *Shakespeare* was a barbarous bungler, and *Goethe* a quack; and that without wealth and ancestry no man could be a gentleman. Poor Monsieur Ziegler! his predilections and dislikes are over now, and his prejudices all at rest. But he played an important part in the story of my life—was the source, alas! of many griefs to me, and the indirect cause of many blessings.

Some of my happiest hours were spent down stairs in the library, when Monsieur came to play at piquet with Madame. Then I was free to read all that I pleased—to indulge in poetry and romance—to dream dreams of chi-

valry—to tremble with Cymbeline at the mouth of the cave—to rejoice at the escape of Fridolin—to follow the wanderings of Wilhelm Meister—to ride with Leonora through the ghastly night; and to mourn over the death of Clorinda.

At fourteen I enjoyed romance; at fifteen I was romantic. At fourteen I devoured every kind of fiction; the novels of Goethe, Walter Scott, Godwin, and De Stael; the plays of Schiller, Shakspeare, and Molière; the poetry of Ariosto, Dante, Byron, and Lamartine; and the wild tales of Hoffman, Nodier, Mrs. Shelley, and Balzac. At fifteen I read less, and thought more. At fourteen I flew breathlessly through a book, and then took up another without reflection or interval, seeking only for "fresh fields and pastures new." At fifteen I fell into long reveries with the open page before me. At fourteen I preferred "Ivanhoe" to anything in the world of books. At fifteen Tasso, the tenderest of Italy's children,—Tasso, the love-breather,—Tasso, the poet of the gondola,—was my favourite reading. At fourteen I loved to read of castles in the air. At fifteen I built them for myself.

I think that just at this time my passion for music became second (though only for a while) to my passion for reading. Perhaps the dry study of pianoforte exercises may have had something to do with it. Perhaps I may have abated somewhat of my enthusiasm for "the touches of sweet harmony" when I exchanged my lonely home at the Water-Gate for the methodical and cheerful household of Madame de Wald, and my evening trances in the dim aisles of St. Nicholas, for the simple worship of the Protestant chapel, where we paid weekly attendance. And here, by the way, I may observe that Madame was the first in this world who opened my eyes to religious truth, and my heart to that love of good which hath its source and being in the fear of God. I became a member of the Swiss Protestant Church, and have never since found reason to alter those opinions which I received beneath the roof of Madame de Wald.

Sometimes I stole in by the twilight of a summer's

evening, and heard the organ as in my childhood; and then the old familiar feeling would sometimes come over me, and the old visions—the airy perspectives and golden palaces of imagination—would open once more before me, and people the dusk with angels. Yet this was seldom now; and, though an intense love of the art made me ambitious to succeed, I did not find in the pianoforte alone that which enslaved my senses and my fancy, and inspired Shakspeare to call music “the food of love.” I needed something more, and I knew not what I needed. Monsieur Ziegler’s violin and our own pianoforte were all the instruments I ever heard; and no one ever took the trouble to discover if I possessed such a thing as a voice.

So I learnt the pianoforte, as all young ladies learn it; and became, in due time, what the world calls “an accomplished performer.” That is to say, I could “execute” a break-neck Capriccio of Liszt or an impossible Fantasia of Thalberg with the precision of a metronome and the correctness of a machine; but I was as yet a stranger to the poetical imagery of Weber and the spiritual pathos of Beethoven. I had never heard the “*Lieder ohne Worte*,” or the “*Moonlight Sonata*,” never been present at the performance of an oratorio or an opera; never listened to a chorus from the *Messiah*, or to a symphony of Mozart!

Music! I but stood upon the threshold of the temple, and beyond that portal lay a world unknown! I loved poetry as I loved truth and beauty; but I had yet to learn what that was which constituted the poetry of sound.

It was just two months after the anniversary of my fifteenth birthday when Louis went to college. Madame had long determined upon this step. She meant him to go when he was fourteen years of age; but, finding him sufficiently advanced, sent him twelve months earlier, and selected the University of Heidelberg for the completion of his education. He was a tall, fair, handsome lad when he left Switzerland, and looked at the least two or three years older. Madame bore the trial with dignified sorrow. The house was very sad without him, and seemed darker and lonelier than ever. He was to remain three v

absent, and well nigh one of these elapsed before we grew in any way reconciled to his loss.

And still I dreamed and studied on, and learned many things, and grew in stature and in mind—and still, through the broad fields of knowledge, and the blossoming valleys of romance, ran pleasantly and smoothly the clear current of my life; reflecting the fairest forms of Earth, and imaging the clouds and stars of Heaven.

CHAPTER IX.

“FAREWELL GOES OUT SIGHING.”

It was about eighteen months after the departure of Louis, and the winter snow lay thickly. I was sitting alone in my bed-room when Gertrud tapped upon the door, and said that Laurent desired to see me.

A visit from Laurent had become somewhat of a rare event during this last year or two; so I uttered a joyous exclamation, and ran down to the library where he awaited me. He was standing by the window, with his face averted as I entered; but he turned hastily at the sound of my coming, advanced a step to meet me, and then stopped irresolutely, as if doubtful whether he should offer to shake hands with me or not.

“Why, Laurent,” I cried; “what brings you to Fribourg?”

“I come to see you, Na—— Mademoiselle Natalie.”

“And for nothing else, Laurent?”

“For nothing else, Mademoiselle—except to bid you good-bye.”

“To bid me good-bye?”

“Yes, Mademoiselle. I am going to Lyons.”

To Lyons! How sudden! How strange! I could hardly believe it! I said something to that effect, and sat down upon the nearest chair. Laurent remained stand-

ing, with his eyes fixed on the ground, and his right hand resting on the mantel-piece.

"Well, Laurent," I said, after a brief silence; "what is your object in going to Lyons?"

"I have obtained a letter of recommendation, Mademoiselle, to a wealthy cabinet-maker of that city, from whom I hope to get employment as a wood-carver."

"And you are going there upon a mere chance?"

"Upon a hope, Mademoiselle."

"And if you should be unsuccessful?"

"If I should be unsuccessful, Mademoiselle, I shall find my way to Paris, somehow or another. There I shall surely contrive to earn my bread; and, if it comes to the worst, I can carry a musket."

I remained speechless for some minutes. Laurent continued:—

"I had better go, Mademoiselle. I have seen no other course before me for long years. I can do nothing here, and there is work in the world for every man. Mine is waiting for me, and I am ready to do it. I have thought this ever since I was a boy, and now that I have come to manhood shall I be less ambitious? It—it costs me more to leave than you think for, Mademoiselle; still I will go."

"And have you thought of all that you will have to endure, Laurent? All the difficulties? All the dangers? How are you at this season to traverse the weary leagues between Fribourg and Lyons?"

"I have considered all. I shall travel on foot, like many another, and carry my knapsack on my shoulders. It will take me a week to accomplish the distance, if the roads be passable; and sometimes I shall get a lift from a voiturier, or a farmer going home from market. The journey will be safe and pleasant enough, Mademoiselle: I have no fear of that."

"You have plenty of courage," I said, sighing; "and plenty of firmness. Few people, I imagine, could part thus readily from—from home and friends."

He made no reply.

"When shall you start, Laurent?"

"To-morrow morning at daybreak, Mademoiselle."

"So soon! Well—I will try to be glad that you are going, since you are so pleased to—to leave us,"

"Oh, Natalie!"

Something in the expression of his face as he said this seemed to reproach me.

"Do you—can you really suppose that I rejoice to leave my home—my country—and you? Do I look like a happy man? Am I not trusting myself to the wide future, like a stray leaf wafted down the current—like a fallen feather borne upon the breeze? Poverty, privation, death, perhaps, may await me; and here I leave all that in this world I prize, honour, and hold sacred! Mademoiselle Natalie, could you look into my heart, you would be the last to tell me I am pleased to leave you!"

"Why do you call me Mademoiselle? I used to be Natalie—'little Natalie'—in the old times when we sat in the Elfin-Stuhl!"

Laurent flushed crimson, and then grew paler than before.

"I am but a poor fellow, Mademoiselle," he said, "and you are a lady. My hands are brown, and yours are white. I know nothing but the little which I have taught myself. You have studied many arts and languages, of which the names alone are known to me. You are as far above me as the bright stars of heaven! I dare only look up to you, as I look up to those—in silence and prayer."

His voice faltered. He hesitated for a moment. Then, in an altered tone, he said—

"Mademoiselle Natalie, we were equals then."

"And we are equals now, Laurent! You humble me when you question it! Call me Mademoiselle no longer—let me be Natalie still! Always Natalie—always equals!"

I burst into tears as I said this, and covered my eyes with my hand. Presently Laurent came nearer to me.

"Farewell, then—Natalie," he said, hoarsely.

I rose up. I trembled, and leaned against the back of my chair.

"You will think of me sometimes, when—when I am far away, Natalie?"

"Laurent! my brother!" It was all that I could say.

He bent down towards me—pressed one hot kiss upon my forehead, and once more whispered "farewell."

At the door he paused for an instant, and looked back. The white light from the window fell full upon his lofty head, and left the rest of his figure in shadow, so that he looked almost like the portrait or apparition of himself. Breathlessly I clasped my hands together, and returned the long gaze. Then the door closed, and I was alone.

The evening dusk of mid-winter crept slowly on—the snow began to fall again in thick flakes—the hymns of the vesper service came faintly and at intervals from the little church at the end of the garden; and still I sat in the old library, without the power to rise, and scarcely the power to think.

By and bye Madame entered with a lamp in her hand.

"I have been looking for you," she said; "and, not finding you in your bedchamber, thought you must be here among the books. But you have been weeping, my child! What is the matter? Have any of your favourite heroes died, or has the romance you were last reading come to a melancholy conclusion?"

"Neither, Madame. Laurent has been here to take leave of me." And then I told her.

"Poor Laurent!" said Madame, thoughtfully, when I had finished. "He will make a name in the world yet. How old is Laurent?"

"I believe he is about twenty, Madame."

"About twenty! And you, Natalie—what is your age?"

"Sixteen and a half, Madame."

"Twenty—sixteen and a half. Three years and a half between you! Well, I wish him success!"

And several times during the evening Madame repeated—"Twenty—sixteen! Well, I wish him success!"

The next morning, as we were sitting at breakfast, a small box was brought to me. It contained a wood-carving—an exquisite statuette representing Joan of Arc at the stake, with her arms bound, her head thrown back,

her long locks falling thickly on her uncovered shoulders, and her eyes upraised to heaven. Enthusiasm, purity, and devotion seemed to hallow the upturned face, and every limb, every fold of the drapery, every tiny accessory was informed with beauty. Under the carving lay a slip of paper, on which these words were written—

“This is the best thing I have done, or I should not venture to offer it to you. Take it, I beseech you; not for its merits, for they are few, but for the sake of the carver, and in remembrance of the past. I shall be some miles upon my way when you receive this; but I go that I may become worthier of myself, and of you. Farewell.”

After this I never remembered Laurent but as I last saw him, when he stood in the open doorway with the light upon his head. He was at that time, as I have already said, just twenty years of age, and his stature already exceeded that of most men. I think he must have been about six feet in height, though afterwards he gained more than an additional inch. Laurent was not handsome; yet I imagine that no person who had once looked upon his face would be likely to forget the resolute expression which characterised it. His forehead was broad, massive, and particularly lofty at the temples. His thick eyebrows nearly met across his brow, and his dark hair fell in large loose locks about the back of his neck, like a mane. His chin was prominent, and the formation of his jaw rather square and heavy, like that of Napoleon in the portrait which represents him after his abdication at Fontainebleau. His throat, too, was like the great emperor's, massive and pillar-like; and even in complexion they were similar, olive-brown, clear, and colourless. Laurent's eyes were of a deep bluish grey, such as commonly distinguishes natives of the north of Ireland; and the iris was encircled with rays of golden brown, which gave an extraordinary depth and tenderness to them. Sometimes, when he spoke or listened earnestly, you might see the iris expand and contract, like the ebb and flow of the tide

upon the shore, or the rising and falling of a passionate heart.

And such was Laurent as I remember him at twenty years of age, when he set forth amid the winter snows to seek his fortune in the wide strange world beyond his native hills.

CHAPTER X.

A HEIDELBERG STUDENT.

I WAS a frequent visitor at the chalet after Laurent had left, and used to gallop over on my little rough pony at least once in every fortnight. There I had long cosy chats with dear old Jacques, and in his letters followed the footsteps of the wanderer. He wrote seldom, and very briefly, never mentioning my name, unless to ask if I were well, and if his uncle had seen me since the last letter.

Failing to obtain the employment for which he hoped at Lyons, he had journeyed on to Paris, and there, after much delay and heart-wearying suspense, had succeeded in obtaining an engagement to execute some oak carvings for the decoration of a new church. He occupied a small lodging, which overlooked the Seine, worked diligently, and, though poorly remunerated for his labour, trusted soon to work his way to a better position. By and bye we heard that he was modelling at the Louvre—that he attended some evening classes for young men, and that he had purchased some books on art, from which he studied when at home. In time he made a few friends, and frequent presents to Jacques (accompanied by kindly souvenirs for others) proved that the old affections held their accustomed places in his heart.

This, and nothing farther which would be worth relating, formed the substance of Laurent's history during the eighteen months longer which followed his departure, and made up the term of Louis' absence.

It is in the bright, glad midsummer, when sunshine

and wild flowers "do paint the meadows with delight," that our collegian comes back to us.

We have been expecting him for some days; but when this warm Wednesday morning dawns so cheerily, and mounts to its noon amid the singing of thousands of birds and the wafting of sweet perfumes from the adjacent hay-fields, we feel a conviction that he must be near at hand, and we whisper, smiling to each other—

"He will come to-day!"

A general restlessness pervades the household. Even Madame, ordinarily so composed and self-possessed, cannot resist the prevailing propensity, but wanders from room to room, seeing that things are in order, and that the traveller's chamber, above all, looks cheerful and comfortable. It has been my task to-day to place bouquets of fresh flowers in all the vases—to uncover the pictures in the great salon, and see that everything is arranged to the best advantage. Nothing has been neglected that could give an air of festivity to the quiet house. The old-fashioned Venetian mirrors, which have not reflected the light of day any time these twelve or fourteen years, present quite a rejuvenescent aspect, and the stately high-backed chairs, that have worn strait-waistcoats of blue chintz ever since I first beheld them, stand revealed in all the glory of antique brocade and mediæval carving.

Everything is ready at last (for even preparations must come to an end when there is nothing more left to be done); so Madame and I seat ourselves in the salon, and try to read. It is strange that we should be so certain of his arrival to-day. We did not feel thus yesterday, although there was just the same probability.

"Eh bien!" says Madame, pointing significantly to her heart—"What would you have? It is a presentiment. Voilà tout!"

And then she tries to read again—then goes up to take one more look at his bedroom; and then comes back, and shifts the position of her chair, so that she may be in sight of the court-yard and the gate.

Thus the noontide passes. The fresh breeze dies away, and the town appears to sleep in the hot silence. The river only is alive and dancing—but shrunk to the half of its width. The very birds have almost ceased their singing.

Suddenly, and at some distance, we hear the faint tones of a French horn—such a sound is unusual here, especially at this time of the day—and it seems to draw nearer. Hush! now it ceases; and now, how strange! it rings out again much nearer, and is mingled with the sound of wheels.

Certainly it comes this way! and a merry tune that horn-player has chosen, too! 'Trala la la, lalla la! Why, surely, it is in this very street, and——

—— and the carriage dashes into the court-yard!

Dashes in—an open voiture, with a pair of steaming horses—and Louis, our own naughty Louis, lying back with his feet up on the opposite seat, blowing away as if for dear life!

Another instant, and the horn is flung down—Louis has leaped out at one bound, and meeting his mother on the stairs, is smothering her with kisses!

"Huzza! my dearest mother! Looking so well, too, and so happy! Ha, Gertrud, how are you? And you, Gottlieb?—and my old friend Caspar, who has saddled my ponies ever since I wore pinafores! Where's little Natalie?—Oh, my dear mother, how glad, how glad I am!"

"My own Louis!"

I hear this from the salon, where I stand, longing to run down with the others, yet arrested partly by a reluctance to interrupt their meeting, and partly by a foolish, fluttered, nervous feeling, which vexes me exceedingly; and to which, notwithstanding, I cannot choose but yield.

"But where's Natalie?" I hear him say. "Where's Natalie?"

"She must be in the salon," replies Madame. It is scarcely said when his quick foot is on the stairs, and I find myself suddenly embraced in a very boisterous manner.

"Why, little Natalie, my old playmate and sister!—But, by Jupiter! what a difference!"

And, half laughing, half blushing, the boy releases me, and opens his blue eyes with unfeigned surprise.

"Well, I suppose three years will change any one," I reply, gaining confidence as he gets embarrassed. "They have changed you, Louis, as well as me."

"But it's not the same Natalie at all! You're ever so much taller, and your hair is darker—and—bless my heart, Natalie, you've grown quite pretty!"

"I'm sure I am greatly obliged to you, sir," I rejoin, with a mock curtsy. "I suppose you have learned to say these pleasant things at Heidelberg! Pray, have you professors of Politeness as well as of Philosophy, and do you go through a course of lectures on the art of flattery?"

Louis blushes again, more deeply than before, and says, awkwardly enough, "I beg your pardon—I—I didn't mean to compliment you at all. You see I'm not used to ladies' society—and at Heidelberg——"

"And at Heidelberg, I fear that young men learn more folly than wisdom," says Madame with a grave smile and a reproving shake of the head. "What could induce you, my dear Louis, to come through the town in so absurd a fashion?"

"Absurd! why, my dear mother, I drove through in triumph."

"And that horrible instrument!"

"Horrible instrument! Surely you are not insulting my French horn by such an appellation? It is my brazen *Lituus*—an indispensable adjunct to the entry of a victorious general. I only regretted not having my *Eneatores* to march before—for, you understand, it is rather ignominious for a general to be obliged to blow for himself!"

"I fear that mine is an idle general," says Madame, fondly, as she beckons him to her side, and, making him sit down at her feet, takes the fair curling head in both her hands. "Now, tell me, darling, what have you learned at Heidelberg?"

"Oh, lots of things, dearest mother! I can fight with rapier, broadsword, or cutlass—snuff a candle with a pistol-bullet—tell you the name and date of brewing of any description of Bavarian beer with my eyes blindfolded—and sing you the song of the 'Leathery Foxes' from beginning to end without forgetting a word; to say nothing of twelve original verses of my own in conclusion!"

"Hush!" says Madame, smiling and sighing together; "I care not to hear of such studies as these. Have you nothing better to tell me, Louis?"

"Nothing better than this," the boy rejoins, gaily, as he draws a parchment from his pocket-book, and (laying it first upon his head in Oriental fashion) places it, with a profound salaam, in the hands of his lady-mother.

"See," he continues, leaning over her shoulder, and regarding it with undissembled pleasure and pride, "see, it is my certificate! First prize Latin poem—first prize essay on Natural Philosophy—second prize Mathematics—second prize Greek classics—honorary medal for French and English, and expression of satisfaction for general good conduct! There, mother! you see, if I am a general at all, I am General GOOD CONDUCT!"

"I shall have it framed," says Madame, with an unwonted flush upon her cheek. "I shall have it framed and hung in the library. Heaven bless you, my own Louis!"

The boy laughs at this and begins to whistle, but stops almost immediately, with, "Dear me! I'm afraid that's rude; I beg your pardon." Then, assuming a boldness which is anything but successful, he takes the chair beside mine, and says,—

"Pray teach me, dear mother, how to talk to Natalie. I don't know what to say to young ladies; and she looks so grown up, and so clever, that I'm quite afraid of her."

"You had better talk to her of Bavarian beer," says Madame, "that is a very interesting subject."

"Or teach me the song of the 'Leathery Foxes,' not

forgetting the '*twelve original verses in conclusion!*' " I add, maliciously.

"Oh, by Jove, now! if you're going to be satirical, I don't know what is to become of me! Talk of something else; old times, books, anything you please. By the bye, Natalie, can you still construe Virgil and Lucian?"

"Better than ever," I reply. "But stay, Louis—construe me that long scar which I see on your right temple; up there, just where 'tis hidden by your hair. How did you get that, sir?"

Poor Louis! he gets redder than ever, and Madame utters a faint exclamation.

"Scar! do you call that a scar?" he says. "Why, that's only a scratch."

"I should be sorry to get such a scratch, then."

"Dear child!" cries Madame, leaning anxiously forward, "what a terrible mark! Was it a fall, my darling?"

"N—no—not exactly a fall, mother."

"What was it then, my child?"

"Well, if you must know," says Louis, reluctantly, "it was a—a fight."

"A fight!"

Madame turns quite pale, but I cannot help smiling.

"Louis," says Madame, impressively, "I insist on your telling me all about it. What was the quarrel?"

"Well, you see," replies the boy, "it wasn't exactly a quarrel, either, but a—a sort of a difference, you know. It was at the Hirschgasse—that's a house over at the other side of the Neckar—a little inn where the fellows go up to supper, and where all the rows take place. We'd been having a very jolly supper, and were going on as good temperedly as possible, when Moritz (a great bully, and what we call a senior at Heidelberg,) took it into his head to abuse England and the English—just on purpose to annoy a young Londoner who had lately joined—a sickly, lame fellow, unable to return an insult for himself. Well, you know, I bore this for some minutes, till I could bear it no longer, and then I could not help saying,

'Moritz, this isn't right, and isn't generous; I'm half an Englishman myself—my mother's English—and I won't stand by and hear it.'

"Right, Louis!" cried Madame, warmly. "And what was his reply?"

"A glass of beer in my face, mother! Could I put up with that, think you? Not I! I returned the compliment with an empty bottle—and—and the end of it was a duel with sabres next morning, in a bean-field at the back of the Hirschgasse."

"Thank heaven, it had no worse termination!" said Madame, very seriously. "But no more of suppers and duels at present, Louis, for here comes Monsieur Ziegler."

Louis groaned audibly, and muttered "Kyrie Eleison!" between his teeth; but drew himself, nevertheless, to his full height, and received M. Ziegler with a profound bow.

"Our young friend returned from Heidelberg at last!" said M. Ziegler, with a grim smile. "Well, this is very satisfactory. In health, too, I perceive. Increased in stature, and, doubtless, more than proportionately in learning. The university where you have had the privilege of studying, sir, is a fine institution; one of the oldest, I believe, in Germany, and founded in 1386. Universities (vulgarly supposed to have originated in convents and chapters of cathedrals in the Church of Rome, where young men were educated for holy orders), were, doubtless, first instituted by the Jews, amongst whom there existed literary titles and distinctions long before the Christian era. I trust, Monsieur Louis, that you have diligently employed the precious hours of youth and study. *'Vita brevis, ars longa,'*—always remember that, sir. Knowledge has justly been called '*pabulum animæ*;' and let me protest to you that no food is so delicious. The more you partake of it, sir, the more hungry you become, and the more tempting you find it. Does not Cicero tell us, '*Non enim paranda nobis solum, sed fruenda sapientia est*?' And does not Sir Kenelm Digby, a learned and undeservedly neglected man of letters of the 17th century, say that all the woes of the

world are caused by the troubled waters of ignorance, 'to cure which the only remedy and antidote is the salt of true learning.' True learning, sir, as saith the wise and witty Montaigne, 'is not to be made a mere appendix to the mind, but to be incorporated with it'—and, above all, beware of reading without reflection; for in these days many scholars too fairly deserve that just reproof of Seneca to the learned of his age, in which he observed, 'Non vitæ sed scholæ, dicimus.' Knowledge is the only friend, sir, who remains faithful to the last and never deceives us; the only companion from the school-house to the grave; the pleasantest food for reflection that old age can compass.

'Hoc est
Vivere bis, vitâ posse priore frui.'

It is said by Surius that bay-leaves were found green in the tomb of St. Humbert after a lapse of one hundred and fifty years, and that the ignorant proclaimed it for a miracle. It was a miracle, sir, to which we all are daily witnesses. The bays are still green on the foreheads of Homer and Virgil; and to be truly illustrious should be the first aim and the chief ambition of youth."

Here M. Ziegler bowed again, took a pinch of snuff, and, turning to Madame, said——

"Shall I be honoured with a match at piquet this evening, Madame de Wald?"

An acquiescent smile from Madame, and the appearance of the cards, gave the signal of release (as of old) to Louis and myself. He muttered some excuse relative to his luggage and left the room, whilst I established myself with a book in a farther corner. Thus the evening passed and Louis was seen no more; but every now and then, amid the quiet observations dropped by the players, and the faint noises from the town, I heard the ringing tones of his French horn discoursing waltzes, and other tunes of a spirited and jovial character, from the upper regions of the traveller's bedchamber.

CHAPTER XI.

THE OLD, OLD STORY.

THERE was a dead silence.

I was sitting at the library table busily translating an English poem into German verse; and, as the subject was one of some difficulty, found myself in no mood to open a conversation.

Louis was lying back in a great arm-chair beside the open window. He had an immense old folio opened before him, behind which he was yawning dismally. Every now and again he whistled, looked at his watch, stared up at the clouds or round at the backs of the books; and sometimes, fixing his eyes absently upon me, seemed to lose himself in long reveries which generally ended with a sigh.

Still I wrote on, and still the silence continued.

Louis grew more restless every minute. Presently he closed the heavy book with a bang that sent up a cloud of dust from the recesses of its musty leaves; replaced it in its home on the lower shelves; and, strolling round and round the room, took down and examined one work after another, without finding any that appeared to suit him.

All at once he stopped by my chair, and said, rather impatiently—

"Come, Natalie, I'm sure you've been poring long enough over that tiresome poem! Here, I have been scarcely a week at home, and you take no more notice of me than if I had never been away at all!"

"Why, Louis!" I exclaimed, smiling and laying aside my pen, "how can you say that? Did I not talk to you and play chess with you the whole of last evening?"

"Last evening!—yes," replied Louis shaking his curls discontentedly; "but here are two hours and a-half that we have been in this dismal old library, and you have not once opened your lips!"

"Do you call this a dismal old library? For shame, sir! I thought you meant to be so very studious, too!

Did you not say, last evening, that you should come every morning, when I did, and study here, as I do, for four hours regularly? And—confess now—have you read two pages of the book you held in your hand?"

"Praise be to Allah!—not one," said the boy, with a merry laugh. "What do you think I had taken up? Why the '*Mémoires de la Société Physique de Genève*'—a vile analysis of the properties of heat! Bah! I am sick to death of all such dry knowledge!"

"Why not go out, then? There is a pony for you in the stable, and there is a fishing-rod in the attic. You cannot want for amusement during this lovely summer's day. Don't condemn yourself to the '*dismal old library*,' if it be so melancholy a place!"

"I don't want to go out, and—and I like to be here."

"Yet just now you were as restless and dissatisfied as possible! What a foolish boy you are! I don't think you know your own mind for five minutes together."

"I suppose it is because you think me such a *boy* that you never speak to me, or look at me," said Louis, pettishly.

I laughed outright. I did not do it to vex him; but the thing was irresistible.

He bit his lip, and turned to leave the room.

"You're not offended, Louis?" I exclaimed, with a vain effort to look serious.

The wayward fellow stopped half way, glanced irresolutely towards me, and burst into a hearty laugh.

I held out my hand to him.

"Come, Louis," I said, "let us be friends; and tomorrow, if you like, we will work in concert. Then we shall be neither idle nor unsociable. What say you to my plan, and what shall be our study?"

"I say that it's a capital idea," cried Louis, rubbing his hands gleefully. "Now let us have a ride together, and we can settle the rest as we go along."

An idle fellow-student was Louis de Wald!

He liked nothing improving. He rejected all that I proposed; would hear of nothing save poetry and plays, and would only read these in the open air, sitting under the trees by the river-side—which, as we all know, is the idlest way of doing an idle thing.

Though familiar to me as the air and the sunlight, they were all new to him, and it was pleasant only to witness his enjoyment of them. Besides, Louis read very well; entered with buoyant enthusiasm into all that was noble, beautiful, and brave; and seemed to impart something of his own freshness and impetuosity even to the pages of my oldest favourites. Thus it happened that, after a day or two, the reading fell all to his share, and only the listening to mine.

From this time I generally took my sketch-book and pencils, and every day we sought some picturesque point in the vicinity of Fribourg, that I might draw while he pursued what he was pleased to call his "studies."

Studies, indeed!

"These be the stops that hinder study quite!"

It is evening—a sweet summer's evening, growing gently dusk.

Through the open windows come occasional waftings of a cooler air, and the gnats keep up a pleasant murmur outside.

Madame is not here. She has gone down to a poor cottage by the stone-bridge, on a visit of charity, and Louis and myself remain sole occupants of the salon. We are sitting side by side in the deep embrasure of the window, and we are very silent—for there is something in the hour—something in the solitude and the shadow, which suffers only the heart to be eloquent, and chains up the fluency of speech.

A word dropped now and then, or the twittering of the birds in the old linden-tree without, alone disturbs the stillness. And so it grows more dusky, and the moon rises broad and brilliant, like the shield of Apollo.

Suddenly my companion starts up, and saying—"I will sing a song for you, Natalie," places himself at the piano—plays a few wandering chords, and, to a simple accompaniment, chants this little serenade:—

Sleep, lady, sleep!
 The silver moon is shining—
 Sleep, lady, sleep!
 Over the throbbing sea,
 The beating passionate sea,
 Her virgin brow inclining,
 As I incline o'er thee!
 Sleep, sleep!

Sleep, lady, sleep!
 The world in peace is lying—
 Sleep, lady, sleep!
 Only the night-winds free,
 The passionate night-winds free,
 Around thy door are sighing,
 As I sigh for thee!
 Sleep, sleep!

His voice trembles towards the last, and he rises abruptly.

"Is there no more, Louis?"

"No more," he replies, returning to the fauteuil in the window. "No more—unless you wish me to add another stanza."

"How! did you compose it?"

He draws nearer to me—so near that I can feel his breath upon my cheek.

"I wrote it last night, after—after you went to bed," he says, dropping his voice to a whisper, and laying his hand timidly upon mine.

And just at this moment, Monsieur Ziegler walks into the room, mindful of piquet, and entertains us, during the remaining interval of Madame's absence, with a learned discourse on the volatilization of solid matter by artificial means.

High up on the brow of a wooded hill near the valley of the Simmenthal, we sat one day, reading a romance of

Lamartine. To the right rose two majestic mountains, the Stockhorn and the Niesen, crested with snow, and disclosing between them the sunny perspective of an enchanting valley. Far away, in the opposite direction, lay the glittering Saarine; the entourage of rock and woodland, the turreted line of old massy fortifications, and the spires of distant Fribourg.

We had left our ponies down below at a road-side inn, and made our way up here in search of shade and a view. We found both, and established ourselves on a little platform carpeted with deep grass and wild flowers, and canopied by the boughs of a large mountain-ash, laden with heavy bunches of the scarlet berry.

The day was warm, and we had ridden many miles. I began to sketch; but could not please myself in a single touch. By-and-bye I suffered the pencils to roll unheeded on the ground; and, resting my cheek upon my hand, sat there listening.

The book was "Raphaël."

Utterly absorbed in the passionate melancholy informing every syllable of this most exquisite heart-story, Louis read on and on, and still I sat listening by, and the hours flew unheeded.

He came to the following passage:—

"Be not disquieted, oh men! lest Time should steal away your sentiments. There is neither *To-morrow*, nor *To-day*, for the powerful echoes of memory. There is only *For-ever*. He who no longer feels, has never felt. There are two memories—the memory of the senses, which decays with the senses, and suffers the perishable to perish—and there is the memory of the soul, for which time hath no existence; which embraces at one glance all the past and all the present of its career; which is a faculty only of the soul, and which, like the soul itself, possesses a spiritual ubiquity, universality, and immortality. Be comforted, ye who love! Time has power only over the hours—none over the heart."

To these words a long silence succeeded. I looked up, and found his eyes upon me.

"Natalie!" he faltered.—"Natalie!"

Something in his voice and attitude made me dumb and powerless. He cast the book behind him, and flinging himself upon the grass at my feet, went on:

"I love you, Natalie! I love you, and you know it! You must have seen it for this long time past—you must have seen how I take my life from your presence—my very breath from the air you move in! I know that you think me a boy—I know that I am a boy; but I have never cared for any one before, and I feel I shall never care for any one again! Hush, Natalie!" he cried, seeing my lips move, and clasping his hands passionately as he spoke—"Hush! I am afraid to hear you! Don't—don't say that I am nothing to you, when you are everything—everything on earth to me!"

Carried away by the impetuosity of his own eager words, he laid his head down upon my knees and sobbed aloud.

"I little thought," he continued, in a voice broken and hoarse with emotion—"I little thought when I came home from Heidelberg, five weeks ago, that the sight of you would change my future as it has done! I had not been four days at home before I began to love you. You know how I have kept near you, and invented a thousand pretexts to share your studies and your walks! I have laid awake many and many a night thinking of you. When I dream, it is only of what you have said or done, or of the way you have looked upon me! I have been a wild, careless fellow, I know—as wild and careless as any among those I've left behind me—but I love you, Natalie! I love you—and I will be anything you please, if you will only love me a little!"

I could not speak. An unknown agitation made my heart beat, and my colour come and go. I knew not what to think, to do, to say. I tried to question my heart, but found there only trembling and confusion.

Still kneeling—still hiding his face in the folds of my dress—the boy kept pleading on.

"You don't know how much I am changed, Natalie!"

At Heidelberg I used to say that I would go into the army. I cared for nothing but boyish frolics, and fighting, and all that sort of thing. A quiet existence among books and women seemed insupportable to me. But now—now, I ask nothing more from fortune! I love poetry since I have loved you, and I could be happier with you in some quiet home, beside one of our native lakes, than if I wore the laurels of Cæsar! I would buy lands and cultivate them—or study to distinguish myself in politics—or be anything and everything that you might wish! Oh, speak to me, Natalie!—speak to me!”

Looking down upon the fair, noble head, resting there upon my lap, and feeling the strong throes of his young heart at every deep, convulsive sob, a strange impulse of tenderness and compassion came over me, and my eyes suddenly were dimmed with tears.

“Dear Louis!” I whispered, and laid my hand lightly on those golden curls.

He uttered a cry of inarticulate joy—put his arms about my waist, and lifting up his face, radiant with happiness, and still wet from weeping, said:

“May I kiss you, dear?”

I bent my head to him for reply, and it would be hard to say which of us blushed the deepest when it was done.

Then a long interval of silence passed. An interval pleasant, yet troubled, and filled with a glory of young love, bright as that which poured in beneath the roofing branches of the mountain-ash, as the sun went down in splendour straight before us, and warned us that the hour for returning had gone by.

Hand in hand, like children as we were, we rose together, and strolled down the winding path to the little inn below; and ever as we went he bent back the boughs to let me pass, and where the footway grew steeper, encircled me with his arm.

Then we remounted, and rode fast, that we might reach home before nightfall.

Our hearts were too full for words, and we were very

silent. Arrived, however, upon the open plain close by the city gates, Louis drew in his rein, and laying one hand on mine, said,—

“Shall we tell my mother to-night, Natalie?”

I had never thought of it till this moment! A chilly presentiment, more vague than a thought and less substantial than a shadow,—a presentiment such as we sometimes feel in dreams—came upon me, and I shuddered.

“Oh no, Louis, not to-night!” I exclaimed, almost involuntarily.

And we galloped into Fribourg.

Love is the wine of life. In the season of our youth when the grape has been but newly crushed and the vintage is pure and golden as the texture of our dreams, the first sip hath power to intoxicate.

Call mine a girlish fancy, if you will, and his a boyish passion, yet it was love—while it lasted.

We lived but for each other. In our long rides and rambles we still took books and pencils; but we needed them not. The only books we cared to read were the fair records of each other's hearts; and if I tried to sketch, his portrait, or the vain and imperfect tracing of his portrait, was all that I attempted.

Wandering thus together, planning our sunny future, and learning by heart the first stanzas of life's poem, we tasted the happiness of the primal Paradise; and often, in our thoughtless egotism, smiled and said that those who never loved deserved no right of immortality, since not Heaven could yield a bliss more perfect than this!

First love! It is but a word: yet, like that fabled word which only to pronounce would raise the dead, it has strange magic in it, and opens wide the sepulchres of the past!

Oh, the bright, bright dream of my youth! Oh, perfume exhaled upon the western breeze! Oh, golden glory died away like the sunset mist around the Alpine heights! Oh, vision of a love transfigured, and, like the patriarch

favourite of old by God, transferred, living and undefiled, to the heaven of memory and imagination!

Life was a dream; and dreams in which he was present were dearer even than life!

CHAPTER XII.

SHADOWS.

"YOUTH, Madame de Wald, is headstrong. The wisest men have done the rashest things under the influence of that dangerous sentiment which, like death, levels every consideration of rank and propriety. Let us, however, do nothing hastily. '*Mala cuncta ministrat impetus*,' saith Papinius Statius; therefore pause, observe, and consider, for, although doubt has become conviction in my mind, justice requires that it should become conviction in yours ere any steps be taken."

I had entered the room before the last words were out of his mouth. The sound, but scarcely the sense of them, reached me, and it was not till struck by M. Ziegler's confusion, that it even occurred to me that I was concerned in their application.

Madame had laid her cards down, and was looking at M. Ziegler with a paler and more anxious face than usual. She always wore a large emerald ring on the forefinger of her left hand, and this ring she was moving up and down—a sure index that she was troubled or displeased.

She paused—looked fixedly at me for a moment as I crossed the room—then turned to M. Ziegler, and said, with a scarcely perceptible inclination of the head—

"See what bad policy it is to attempt two things at one time! I protest that since we have been conversing I have entirely forgotten the position of our game."

With these words they resumed, and nothing farther, unless in connexion with the play, was said that evening.

"Dangerous sentiment!" "Doubt!" "Conviction!" I would have given the world to exchange a few words with Louis. He was down-stairs in the library. I might easily have gone to him, and would have done so unhesitatingly half an hour since—but now, now I dared not! My limbs trembled under me, and I sank into the nearest chair.

Oh, that we had told all from the very first!

Why had we deferred it day after day, and week after week, till timidity had come to wear the semblance of deception? Why had we loved on with our childish love, built castles in the air, and drawn out the visionary picture of our future, without first hallowing our hopes by the sanctity of his mother's approval? Alas! alas! what cowards, what fond cowards had we been!

We had wanted, not honour, but courage—courage only! Yet, trembling there in a dark corner, I felt almost a guilty creature, and dared not meet her eye, or rise to leave the room.

Thus a long time passed. The lights were dim and the atmosphere oppressive. My head ached with anxiety and incertitude; and ever I heard the monotonous falling of the cards, and the unceasing "tierce to your king," "Carte-blanche, Madame," "pique," "repique," and "capot," till my temples throbbed as if I were in a fever, and an almost uncontrollable passion of nervous irritability possessed me.

At length I could endure the torment no longer. I pleaded fatigue, and hurried from the room. On the landing I paused. Should I, or should I not, go down to the library?

I could hear him humming a gay tune, and pausing, now and then, to say a kind word to his dog.

"Oh, no," I murmured, pressing my hands upon my breast. "Enough for one of us to be unhappy to-night."

And so I went up to bed—but not to sleep. One by one the household retired to rest; and Louis, passing my door with loitering step, chanted softly these sweet lines of Ludovico Carrer's:—

"Poco l'ora è omai lontana,
Palpitando il cor l'aspetta
Già rimbomba la campana,
E tu dormi, o mia diletta ?"

(*Translation.*)

"The happy hour is near at hand,
My throbbing heart its watch is keeping
The evening bell tolls o'er the strand,
And thou, belov'd one, art thou sleeping ?"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE STORM AT LAST.

THE next was a wet day. I rose late and unrefreshed; and, when I went down-stairs, found Madame and Louis looking through the steward's account-book in the library. This task, I well knew, would occupy their entire morning, so I retired to my own chamber among my books and papers, and gave up all hope of speaking with him before the afternoon.

At the dinner table we met again. Madame was pale and very serious, and Louis weary of accounts and discontented with the weather. For myself, I was painfully conscious of my haggard looks, and my utter inability to do more than briefly answer when spoken to.

After dinner, thought I, we shall be alone!

After dinner Madame requested me to fetch a trifle from her bedchamber.

The trifle—I think it was a glove or a handkerchief—had to be sought in her wardrobe. After a momentary delay I found it, locked the wardrobe door, turned to leave the room, and came face to face with Madame upon the threshold!

"Stop, Natalie," she said, waving me back again with her hand. "I wish to speak with you for a few minutes—alone."

She closed the door, led the way into her dressing closet, took her seat upon the sofa, and bade me place myself at her side.

Like one dreaming, I obeyed her. I could not have spoken at that moment had the price of my speech been a kingdom.

Madame sat silent for some minutes. Presently she took my cold hand in hers, and said very gently—

“Natalie, I have tried to be a mother to you, and to perform all that should be a mother’s duties. Say, have I fulfilled my part?”

I could but bow my head passively in reply.

“Well, I have striven to do so, and I have been recompensed tenfold in the affectionate obedience with which you have received the little that I had to give. Nay—no thanks. Not words, but deeds, Natalie; deeds are what I expect from a heart so grateful, so truthful, so upright as yours.”

I bent down and pressed my lips silently upon her thin white hand. Had it been to die for her, I felt at that moment that I could have done it.

“You have not been my child for so many years,” she continued, “without becoming thoroughly known to me. More thoroughly, perhaps, than you are aware. Underlying that gentle and sensitive surface-nature of yours, Natalie, I read a sterner basis of courage and constancy—a power of endurance—a sense of binding duty, not commonly found in the character of either man or woman. It is to this, your firmer self, that I appeal to-day. Listen to me.”

I was listening to her—Heaven knows how I was listening to her, and how I dreaded every word that might next fall from her lips!

Still holding my hand, she looked into my face and went on.

“There have been tongues at work, Natalie, telling me of things that I did not wish to hear; whispering suspicions that I should weep to believe; urging me to watch, listen, and observe, none of which I would wrong you by

doing. I had confidence in your honour, Natalie. I resolved to ask yourself only. Was I right?"

I was still unable to do more than make a faint gesture of assent. I felt myself growing colder and colder beneath her steady gaze.

"I am rich," said Madame, "but not so rich as, perhaps, many persons suppose; and my fortune, did I reside in my native England, would seem but very moderate when contrasted with that which is enjoyed by wealthier members of my family. My grandfather, Natalie, was an English peer, and my father the youngest of four sons. He died, and left my mother with two children—my sister and myself. His property (sufficient, though limited) was divided equally between us upon the death of our mother. My sister married at eighteen—married beneath her rank, to a young officer of obscure family, who fell, fighting gallantly, at the Battle of Toulouse. His widow and orphan daughter reside in England. They are poorer than I. The capital of my sister's dowry and her Government-pension are their only resources; but they are very happy, and, living in retirement, exist only for each other. I married, as you know, Monsieur de Wald, my dear, lost husband." (Here her voice faltered for an instant, but she controlled it, and proceeded.) "He was a Bernese gentleman, of lofty descent and easy fortune. One whose alliance might have conferred honour on a queen. Even my relatives could find no point upon which to found an objection, although they may have wished me to wear an English title, and reside on English lands. You know how I lost him, Natalie, and how soon. You know what my life has been ever since. For fourteen years I have dwelt in this remote and isolated town. For fourteen years I have devoted my energies, my thoughts, my hopes, to one object. During that time I have expended but the fourth part of my income—I have not once revisited my own far country—I have not once seen the faces of those nearest and dearest to my youth. Why have I done this? I have done it, Natalie, that my son may take the station due to his descent in the country of my birth—I have

done it that we may, by and bye, return to its shores and to the circle which is our due. I would have him inferior to no young man of his age and rank in all that glittering court. I would have him wealthy; I would have him ambitious; I would have him renowned! With his connexions there is no dignity to which he might not reasonably aspire; and with his talents there is no political eminence to which he might not attain. Natalie, to the accomplishment of this great end, it is necessary that one imperative condition be fulfilled. He must marry wisely, worthily, highly."

I knew it! I knew it! I had known it from the moment she first named her aristocratic blood—from the moment that I saw that faint, proud flush mount up to her pale cheek! Fool, fool that I had been to dream a dream so childish with so obvious a reality before my eyes!

"Natalie," said Madame, impressively, "do you understand me?"

Understand her!

I bent my head for the third time, and said, "I do."

How strange! I scarcely recognised the tones of my own voice, so harsh were they, and so grating!

A look of tenderest compassion passed over her countenance.

"Do you love him?" she said, gently; "and does he love you? Hold, my poor Natalie," she added, hastily, as I turned my face aside and clasped my hands. "Hold! I am answered, and God knows I wish to inflict no needless pain upon you! It wrings my heart almost as much as yours, my child—but it is my duty, my duty, and I *must* do it. You are but a child—he is still more a child than yourself. Unequal marriages, and marriages contracted on the giddy impulse of a childish passion, end in bitterness and sorrow inevitable! You will both thank me for this in years to come—but, alas! these truths sound trite and cold to you now, Natalie, and bring no comfort with them! Oh, that I had been spared this hard trial!"

She pressed her hand upon her heart, and her lips trembled. I had never seen Madame so moved, so pale before.

I forgot my own agony in the sight of hers. I knelt before her; I clasped her hand convulsively in both of mine, and covered it with tears and kisses, though but a moment before no anguish of my own could force a tear from me.

She threw her arms round my neck, and drew my head to her bosom.

"Natalie," she said, brokenly. "Natalie, can you do all that I am going to ask from you?"

"I can," I murmured, sobbing.

"Can you consent to relinquish all, all for my sake, Natalie? to go far away, where he can see you no more? to let him forget you? to part from me, from him, from Switzerland, perhaps for years?"

My tears ceased to flow, and my brow grew icy.

"I can."

"Can you consent to go away suddenly and secretly—this very night, if I so arrange it—and not even bid him farewell?"

"I consent," said I, with stony lips and a heart that seemed to have stopped beating.

She pressed my head back with her two hands, and looked at me long and earnestly. Her eyes were filled with tears.

"My brave Natalie!"

It was all she said, but it inspired me with a strange feverish strength, and made me resolute. I rose from where I had been kneeling, and, though I trembled from head to foot, stood upright before her.

"I will do all that you bid me," I said, in a low, stern voice. "Speak, my second mother—shall I prepare to go?"

"Not yet, my child. Rest now, for you need it. Lie down here, Natalie, upon my bed. It is yet early, and I have many things to think of. I will account for your absence down-stairs. Lie still, and strive to be calm—to keep calm. It is all I ask of you at present. Heaven bless you, dear!"

I obeyed her. I went into the next room and laid

down upon her bed. She had desired me to be calm, so I folded my arms upon my breast, and was calm—outwardly.

She went to her desk and wrote a letter, and, when it was written, rang for Gertrud, and despatched it. That done, she wrote a second, which she sealed carefully, and placed in a small green morocco pocket-book that she always carried upon her person. I observed, also (for every sense seemed sharpened, and every nerve alive to the most trifling impressions, as I lay there so quietly and so despairingly), that she first emptied the little book of its contents—then placed the second letter in one of its pockets—then took several new bank-notes from a spring-drawer in her desk, and with them filled the other vacant pockets, and lastly brought it in, and left it upon her dressing-table.

Then Gertrud came back. M. Ziegler was below, and desired to speak with Madame for a few moments. Madame hurried from the room.

"Sweet Saint Eulalie, how pale you look!" cried Gertrud, coming over to the bed-side with affectionate solicitude. "What is the matter, Mademoiselle Natalie?"

"My head aches, Gertrud," I replied, closing my eyes, "and I have laid down on Madame's bed for a little while, by her advice."

Gertrud went over to the window and drew down the blind, lest the light should offend my eyes.

"I hope your head will soon be better, Mamselle," she said, moving away on tiptoe, and closing the door softly behind her.

Oh, I was calm—very calm indeed!

The daylight faded slowly off the window, and the shadows darkened in the corners of the room. I heard the library door opened and closed many times—a frequent murmur of voices—now and then footsteps gliding cautiously up and down the stairs, fearful of disturbing me. Once—and that was the hardest of all—Louis came stealing to the door. I knew it was he by the beating of my heart, even before he spoke.

"Natalie!" he whispered; "Natalie! are you better?"

But I feigned sleep, and made no answer; so he went away again, and came no more.

And still, oh God!—still I kept my hands crossed on my breast, and stirred not hand or foot. And still the dusk thickened, and I laid there—calmly.

It was quite dark when Madame returned. She brought a candle in her hand, and was followed by Gertrud, bearing a tray with refreshments.

She came to the bed-side and took my hand—it was hot enough now!

“Courage!” she whispered. “Courage, my brave child! Rise now and eat, for you will need strength to-night.”

I understood her. It was to be to-night!

I rose, and went over to the chair which they had placed for me at the table. I did not know that I had been so weak, and it was with difficulty that I concealed from them how my limbs failed under me.

There was wine and meat before me, and when Madame had served me with her own hands, she and Gertrud passed on through the dressing-closet into the little bed-room beyond—the little bed-room to which she had brought me one sad summer’s night, just seven years ago!—the little bed-room which had been mine ever since—which I entered in sorrow—which I left broken-hearted!

I heard them open my drawers one after another. I heard a box dragged out from beneath my bed. I heard their whispering voices, and the jingling of Madame’s keys.

They were packing my clothes for me!

I drank a glass of wine hastily—and then another. I could not have swallowed a morsel had my life depended on it; but I thought how she would be grieved if she knew that I went away fasting, so I concealed a piece of bread in my pocket, and cut the meat upon my plate, that she might believe I had partaken of it.

Then they came back, carrying the trunk between them, and I knew that it was all over. Madame took her own travelling-cloak, lined with costly sables, from the recesses of her wardrobe, and wrapped it about me, weeping bit-

terly the while. Gertrud placed my bonnet on my head, and even drew the gloves on my passive hands.

I could not speak or stir. They dressed me like a child; but I was calm, still calm.

It was now about eleven o'clock at night. All were in bed save we three. It was very dark out on the stone staircase, and the light of the solitary candle flickered feebly.

They carried the trunk down first—Madame, who had never done a thing so laborious in her life!

Then she came back for me alone. She sobbed—she pressed me to her heart—she implored the blessing of Heaven on my head. She called me again and again her daughter, her child, her brave Natalie! She placed the pocket-book in my hands.

"There is money," she said; "money for your journey—thrice the sum needful. And there, too, is a letter to my sister in England. She will receive you as a second daughter, and love you dearly. You will live with her as you have lived with me; and, after a few years, when, perhaps, you have found some other and dearer protector, worthy of your love and my consent, you will return to Fribourg, and revisit your second mother and your old home! Farewell, my child. You do not travel unprotected. A carriage waits below, and Monsieur Ziegler is there. He will go with you to Basle, and consign you to the charge of some good friends of his, who are travelling to Ostend. There they will place you on board the English steamer, and when you reach London you shall be met by some friend of my sister. Try to be patient, as you have been obedient and true! Heaven protect you! Farewell!"

She held me again in her arms; then led the way down-stairs. In the hall we passed Louis' dog, lying asleep upon a mat. I stopped, put my arms about his shaggy neck, and kissed him. The poor animal started, whined a little, and laid down his head to sleep again.

"Adieu, Mamselle Natalie!" sobbed Gertrud, standing the gate. I kissed her also, and got into the carriage.

Madame was standing on the stone steps with the candle in her hand. I could just see her face looking over to me through the darkness.

Then the carriage moved slowly away—the high walls hid court-yard and all from my sight—there was nothing but the narrow street, and the glaring carriage-lamps, and the tramp of the horses hurrying me away.

All, all over! Nothing left in the world!—nothing but anguish!

“Good evening to you, Mademoiselle Natalie,” croaked Monsieur Ziegler, from behind the collar of his cloak. “It is a cold night for August, but pleasant enough for travelling.”

I had not observed him before, sitting up there in the opposite corner! My heart swelled within me, and I was too proud (or too broken-spirited) to vouchsafe a reply.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN TRANSITU.

It is still dark night when we drive into the gates of Berne. Leaning back there, half-stupified, I scarcely heed the world beyond the carriage-windows, but am sensible of threading a wilderness of narrow streets, with gleaming water courses lying along the centre of them, and gloomy arcades built over the footways at either side. Stopping presently at the door of a large building, we hear the sudden ringing of a clamorous bell; hostlers and waiters hurry out with lanterns and fresh horses; there is a confusion of tongues, both French and German, and some disputing between the postillions; then the crack of a whip—our steaming animals are left in the middle of the road surrounded by a little knot of lookers-on, and we are again rattling along over the unequal pavement.

Out by the Aarburg-Gate with soldiers lingering near, and along the misty river-banks! There is no moon, and all is dark before us. The roadside trees look gaunt and

shadowy, and the course of the stream far below is marked by a tract of white vapour.

M. Ziegler is sleeping soundly in his corner, and the horses' bells keep up a weary jingling to the monotonous dull bass of our rumbling wheels. An inexpressible sensation of dreary bewilderment comes upon me. It is but a horrible dream after all, and shall I wake from it presently?

A cold gray tint steals by and bye over the horizon, and the carriage lamps grow paler. The gliding trees and roadside crosses look more spectral than ever, and some hills to the left are outlined faintly through the thick air. Then we reach a point whence many roads diverge. A sign-post comes in view, and it is now just light enough for me to see that we are fifteen miles distant from Solothurn and seven from Berne.

And then I remember that we must have passed through the green valley of the pine-forests—passed by the old brown chalet where the sunniest hours of my early childhood were spent. Alas for the absorbing selfishness of sorrow! I had never even thought of it till this moment, and I might at least have given a farewell glance to the chamber-window of dear old Jacques, whom I may never meet again! He was sleeping, perchance, at that moment. Did the sound of these fatal wheels conjure up no dream of his little Natalie, as she went by?

Wandering back, with a heavy sense of present affliction weighing upon me all the time, I fall into a train of musings, and, mingling many things strangely dissimilar, find myself thinking of Laurent and the Elfin-Stuhl, and the library at Fribourg with Louis and his dogs; and so drop by slow degrees into a feverish sleep, crossed by uneasy visions, and interrupted by a change of horses half-way.

It must be about three hours from the time that I first fell asleep when a dream comes to me—a dream more palpable than the rest—a dream which is, even now, as distinctly present to me as when it first traversed the chambers of my brain.

I am still sitting in the carriage, and the gray landscape, with its shifting succession of trees and hills, is still passing by the windows; but it is not M. Ziegler who is my companion—it is Louis, Louis himself, close at my side, holding my hand in both his own; and ever as we go the merry bells are ringing out from unseen steeples, and a fond voice murmurs near that it is our bridal day—our bridal day

And I wake with a smile upon my lips, to find the joyous sunlight streaming in, and the fortifications of Solothurn, with the great old red gate standing straight before us. It is the horses' bells that are ringing—it is M. Ziegler sleeping there before me—it is exile, and sorrow, and utter weariness of spirit!

So now we rattle under the dark archway and cross slowly and carefully over the wooden bridge, which creaks and rocks beneath us, and looks ready to fall into the river below, for very age and rottenness. The stream runs broadly and brightly, and the antique town lies high upon the opposite bank. To the left stands a ruined round tower of Roman build, with long grasses and shrubs growing out from the windows, and between the interstices of the crumbling brickwork. In the middle of the streets are beautiful old fountains surmounted by figures of armed knights, and monsters, and emblematic groups, round which the boys and girls congregate with their pitchers, and stare after our carriage as we pass. There are curious towers and turrets at the corners of the thoroughfares—long narrow arcades branching over the footway—old brown steeples, and still older houses clustered strangely together, as if for want of space, and basketmakers, shoemakers, and other tradesmen plying their avocations outside the doors of their dwellings. Farther up the hill, just by the hotel where we stop to breakfast, is a roughly-built square clock-tower, with a quaint group of mechanical puppets and two clock-faces. To this M. Ziegler (awakened by the recollection that he is fasting) directs my especial attention.

“Aha! the clock-tower, you perceive, Mademoiselle. Natalie—the clock-tower of Solothurn! A very remark-

able edifice indeed, and supposed to have existed for five hundred years before the Christian era. For myself, I am disposed to reject the suggestions of those antiquarians who conceive it to be a Roman work, and adopt rather the opinion of others who ascribe it to the ancient sovereigns of Burgundy; since, as you are possibly aware, there yet remain in many parts of France, especially in those districts bordering the Swiss and German frontiers, some highly interesting fragments of . . . Breakfast! certainly, and at once, if you please, for we are in haste—and, waiter, do you hear?—broiled pigeon and veal cutlets, and a bottle of vin d'Asti. Positively, I am exceedingly hungry!"

Hereupon M. Ziegler hands me from the carriage with stiff politeness, and we go into the "salle à manger" of the Crown Hotel, where about sixty men, principally English and German tourists, are noisily discussing a plenteous public breakfast.

M. Ziegler professes to be amazed at my want of appetite (he has no cause for uneasiness respecting his own), and, as soon as the last morsel has disappeared, hurries me away again. Our vehicle and fresh horses are already awaiting us—landlord and waiters bow us to the door—the peculiar cry of the driver and crack of his whip give the signal for motion, and presently we have left the town behind us, and are speeding away towards that belt of pine-crowned hills that seems almost to skirt the horizon.

And now M. Ziegler takes a small black volume from his pocket, lays his hat aside, and composes himself for a long morning's study, leaving me to the companionship of my own thoughts.

The country is undulating, but monotonous. Fields, farmhouses, orchards, and roads, over and over again. Nothing but this for miles, till, coming to the base of a mountain, and turning a sudden corner which seems to lead almost into the heart of the rock, we find ourselves, all at once, entering the mouth of a deep defile guarded by the ruins of two ancient castles on two opposing heights.

It is a pass of exceeding beauty, winding between the

steep and lofty mountains that commence the Jura chain. Weary and sick at heart as I am, it arrests all my attention for the time.

Here a little glassy stream runs through the very middle of the gorge, crossed in places by tiny wooden bridges, turning busy mills, and sometimes foaming down a pebbly weir, or over a fragment of fallen granite. There are water-lilies, too, and forget-me-nots, and green cresses growing where the water runs smoothest, and, halfway through the pass, the iron furnaces and picturesque cottages of the village of Innere Klus are built upon its banks. High on either side rise the great mountains, part rocky, part grassy; sometimes covered with rich pastures and gentle slopes up to an amazing height, and then capped by dark pine-woods; sometimes broken into sudden crags, with here and there a single tree perched on some airy ledge, and projecting so steeply over the carriage-road below as to threaten the passing traveller with "danger as infinite as imminent." The cows are feeding in large herds on the upper pasturages, and the bells upon their necks give out a tinkling music which is pleasantly audible down in the valley. The road is bordered by apple and cherry-trees. I sometimes see a tiny thread of falling water sparkling down the over-hanging precipice like a miniature cascade, and sometimes only hear the trickling of its fall amid the concealing leaves.

Now the gorge is suddenly closed by a strong castle which secures it like a portal, and we pass out into the broad pastoral valley of Bahlstahl, lying between the mountain ranks, studded by villages and fields, traversed by silvery streams, and stretching away for miles and miles into shadowy perspective.

Still on beside a noisy rivulet, and up a perilous road hewn in long zigzags upon the shoulder of the Hauenstein—on till the sunny valley is lost, and we come upon the little village of Lahnebruck high up in the heart of the mountains.

Then the gradual descent commences. More valleys, more steeps, more mills, and streams, and villages, and

then, at the foot of the great range, coming once more upon the level world beyond, the village of Waldenburg, where M. Ziegler stays awhile to lunch upon trout, and drink a *demi-bouteille* of the Yvorne wine.

In is an old-fashioned rambling inn, this where we rest, and its windows look up the slanting street where the children are at play beside the pump. The green mountains seem almost to close up the end of the thoroughfare, being so near at hand, and the landlord of the rival inn at the corner stands under his sign, and looks sulkily upon our carriage changing horses at the door. I cannot eat; but I take a glass of the white wine, and listlessly turn over the leaves of the visitors' book lying on a table between the windows, perceiving which, M. Ziegler asks me politely for the same, and, scanning it while he is at lunch, stands it, for his better convenience, against the water-bottle beside his plate.

"H—m! h—m! Countess St. Arnaud and suite, with—(vinegar, if you please)—Duchess of Cambridge and—(a clean plate)—Colonel Somerset and family; Mr., Mrs., and Miss Wallenstein Wigglesworth, *en route* for Basle! Ha! this concerns you, Mademoiselle Natalie! Do you hear? Mr., Mrs., and Miss Wallenstein Wigglesworth, *en route* for Basle. That is the English party to whose care I shall consign you in the course of another two hours, and with whom you will travel to the coast of Belgium. Another glass of wine? No! Well, then, I think it is time we were on the road again!"

I have been looking at some strange old prints, representing the six days of the Creation, which are suspended round the walls in little black frames, but at these words I turn away, and, bestowing one glance of curiosity at the rambling hand in which the entry respecting Mr., Mrs., and Miss Wallenstein Wigglesworth is written, I follow M. Ziegler, for the last time, to our vehicle.

And now, worn out, I suppose, by mental and bodily fatigue, lulled perhaps by the regular motion of the wheels along the level road, and the measured chiming of the bells, and, perhaps also by the glass of wine drunk

fasting, I fall into a long and peaceful sleep, untroubled by a dream, and wake at last in a totally new scene, beside the rushing waters of a majestic river, and in sight of the steeples and turrets of a large city.

This city is Basle—this river the Rhine.

CHAPTER XV.

THE WIGGLESWORTH FAMILY.

THE family of Wigglesworth were staying at the Bear Inn. Now, it chanced that there were at that time twelve Bear Inns at Basle, and that this was the smallest, the dirtiest, and the meanest of all. Consequently, having tried them successively, according to their ratio of respectability, we came to the right one, after wasting something more than an hour and a-half in visiting the other eleven.

It was a rickety, dilapidated building, in a narrow street sloping down to the river. Judging from the groups of peasants and sailors sitting smoking round the door, and the market folks eating within, it combined the questionable advantages of ale-house, eating-house, and lodging-house. We were shown up to a small sitting-room on the second floor, with a single window overlooking the Rhine-bridge, where we found a party of four persons assembled round a tea-table.

They all rose in some confusion as we entered, and it was not till my companion began to introduce himself that they appeared to recognise him. No sooner, however, had he pronounced the first syllable of his name, than an elderly lady, who appeared to have been presiding, rushed forward, grasped him by both hands, and welcomed him with a torrent of rapturous ejaculations.

"Well, I declare now! And so it is—it really is M. Ziegler! Wigglesworth, my dear, this is M. Ziegler. Don't you remember M. Ziegler of Fribourg? M. Ziegler, who was so very kind to us, and who has such a beautiful

collection of old paintings and—and stuffed things! Anna, darling, surely *you* don't forget M. Ziegler, though I dare say he would not recognise you now, after five years of absence. Five years make an immense difference at Anna's age, don't they, M. Ziegler? But, dear me! how giddy I am—I declare I was forgetting to introduce to you Count Stanislaus Nogodi, a Hungarian nobleman, and a particular friend of Anna's—Hem! M. Ziegler—Count Stanislaus Nogodi. And, tell me now, dear M. Ziegler, what has brought you to Basle? and did you receive a little note I sent you the other day, previous to our departure from Switzerland? And what have you been doing all this long time, and who is this very charming young lady upon your arm? Married, eh, you sly man? Oh, I beg your pardon! Mademoiselle Natalie Metz! Delighted to have the pleasure of your acquaintance, Mademoiselle. Allow me to make known to you my husband, Mr. Wallenstein Wigglesworth, my daughter Anna, and Count Stanislaus Nogodi. You find us in a very curious place—a very curious place indeed, Mademoiselle; but it is quite by mistake that we are here at all. We were recommended by our delightful friend the Prince of Quartz Potz to the Bear at Basle, and of course he made a mistake in the name, and meant either the Three Kings or the Cigogne; for he is a man of inimitable taste in hotels, is the Prince, and a great traveller! But we are here, you see, and so we make the best of it. Now do come over to the table and take tea, for you must be so terribly fatigued. Try a piece of this pie; I assure you 'tis most delicious. Wigglesworth went out himself and bought it not half an hour ago. We generally buy our own provisions when we are travelling: the cookery at these foreign hotels is detestable, and the charges are so preposterous. I assure you, dear M. Ziegler, we all live on this plan sumptuously—sumptuously—for three francs a day! Ah, that surprises you, I dare say—and it surprises the hotel keepers, too. They don't much like it, I promise you; but they get no dishonest gains out of my purse if I know it! Another little piece of pie, Made-

mademoiselle Metz? What, not a tiny piece? Now I fear you don't like it. Try a pepper cake! Wigglesworth, pass the pepper cakes to Mademoiselle. I made them myself, after an invaluable receipt given to me twenty years since by dear old Lady Griddle, of Castle Griddle, Leith. You see I'm very hungry, and so is the Count. The fact is, we have been out all day sketching at the ruins of Hünningen, and this is our dinner as well as our tea. We very often do so, very often, indeed, when we are travelling; it saves so much time, and table-d'hôtes are so ridiculously dear! By the way, do you know Hünningen? An enchanting spot—so picturesque!—so deliciously savage! You must see the little drawings made to-day by Anna and the Count. Anna has great taste for art, and Count Stanislaus is perfect master of the pencil and—and india rubber! Anna, my love, just fetch the portfolio here, to entertain Mademoiselle Metz!"

The portfolio was brought, and, taking up my position near the window, I amused myself by alternately looking over its contents, and observing the different characteristics of my entertainers.

Mrs. Wigglesworth was fair and thin, and wore a light front of exceedingly loose disposition, and a pair of blue glasses. Her dress was of some nondescript colour and material. She walked as if she were web-footed. She spoke with a gasping lisp, and jerked out her sentences oddly. She also wore her shawl and bonnet, and it is a curious fact that, during the whole of the time I travelled under the protection of Mrs. Wallenstein Wigglesworth, I never beheld her divest her person of these frequently inappropriate articles of attire. Whether she slept in that bonnet I cannot say; but I do avouch that she never emerged from her chamber in the morning without it on her head, nor failed to retire in the same manner at night. Besides this, she had a peculiar habit of looking at you sideways, like a cockatoo—which she somewhat resembled.

Mr. Wigglesworth was also very fair, with light anxious blue eyes, and a profusion of thin sandy hair, which was sprinkled plenteously with grey, and stood up all over his

head, giving him a very nervous and excited appearance. He wore a blue and black checked shooting jacket, with a number of open-mouthed, hungry-looking pockets, and a pair of nankeen trousers, which had shrunk from frequent washing. He spoke very rapidly, very seldom, and with a strong north-country accent.

Their daughter was a tall, upright, and rather graceful girl of about seventeen years of age. She was dressed in the worst taste imaginable; and yet had contrived, by a pretty womanly instinct, to dispose the least promising materials in the most effective manner. She never opened her lips except to the Count, who, by the way, was chiefly remarkable for a strong odour of tobacco, an imposing moustache, and a very trifling display of linen.

Sitting in the window, and examining by the fast-fading daylight a number of wretched sketches, representing chalets, castles, cathedrals, and celebrated ruins, all of which appeared to be in imminent danger of falling, I found an opportunity of thus remarking the exteriors of my future companions, while M. Ziegler stated to Mrs. Wigglesworth the object of his visit, and requested for me the favour of her escort from Basle to Ostend.

"From Basle to Ostend—Oh! with the very greatest pleasure, M. Ziegler! Wigglesworth, my dear, did you hear that? We are to have the pleasure of Mademoiselle Metz's company to Ostend! How delightful, to be sure, and what an advantage for Anna! I am only sorry, dear Mademoiselle, that it will be for so short a time. We are going direct, you know, quite direct, for we have been all over the ground before, and are hastening now to Belgium, where we think of residing for a short time on the coast, for the benefit of the sea air. Dear Anna, you know, is so delicate, and everything is so particularly cheap in the Low Countries. But we shall have nearly a week together, and we shall enjoy it so much! Besides, you speak such charming English—oh, indeed you do!—charming!—charming! Wigglesworth, dear, don't you think Mademoiselle's English quite equal, if not superior, to that of the Baroness Kalbskopf, with whom we were so

intimate in Vienna? Such a fascinating woman, the Baroness Kalbskopf, dear M. Ziegler—plays so exquisitely on the guitar, and has such surprising luck at roulette! What's this? Lights? Nein, Kellner, nein! Nous ne voulons pas, entendez vous! Wigglesworth, do speak to this man! You know their horrid language so much better than I do, and he will insist on lighting a pair of wax-candles and charging them in the bill, whether we want them or not!"

Here the astonished waiter was interrupted by an excited harangue in bad Rhenish German from Mr. Wigglesworth, and, after a contemptuous stare at the pie and other eatables, retreated in dudgeon, bearing the candles with him. Whereupon Mrs. Wigglesworth opened a wicker-basket of large capabilities, and taking forth a small tin candlestick and an end of wax-light, illuminated the room triumphantly at her own expense.

Shortly after this M. Ziegler bade me a formal farewell and took his departure, accompanied by Mr. Wigglesworth, who volunteered to pilot him to the hotel of the Three Kings. Anna and the attentive Count leaned out of the open window, looking over the river, and conversing in whispers. Mrs. Wigglesworth, who, to do her justice, seemed really cordial and kind, busied herself about engaging a bed-chamber for me near her own; and then, on my pleading great fatigue as an apology for retiring so early, insisted on accompanying me thither, and seeing that all was in readiness and sufficiently comfortable.

"We start to-morrow morning, my dear Mademoiselle—that is, if *you* are strong enough to travel—and leave here about ten o'clock. I'm sure I am most delighted to have you with us! You must talk to Anna to-morrow. She is such a sweet child, and so wrapt up in the Count! I hope you will like the Count. Such a noble character! such a patriot!—such a devoted lover! He has made the most princely presents to Anna. It was only this morning that he gave her a lovely little locket containing a piece of his hair! He owns an immense castle—the Schloss Nogodi—somewhere in Hungary; but I forget the name

of the place, just at present. Anna will tell you all about it to-morrow. We met him last winter at the house of the Baroness Kalbskopf (you heard me mention the Baroness before?) in Vienna. He was greatly struck with Anna then; but, *entre nous*, there was *somebody else* in the way at that time (a very delightful young man he was, too, and quite an aristocrat—Monsieur Ragout by name), and so it came to nothing. But it is not more than a fortnight since we encountered each other again, quite by accident, down at Baden (Swiss Baden, you know), and now, as you see, they are engaged. Ah, young love! young love!—how beautiful it is to stand by and observe it! Well, you are dreadfully tired, so I won't detain you any longer with my prattle. Good night, my dear Mademoiselle—you will sleep to-morrow night, I trust, at Mannheim or Mayence. By the bye, have you any soap with you? Ah, you are not used to travelling, or you would know why I ask that question! My dear young lady, if you only touch their soap at these hotels, they will make you pay for the entire cake; only fancy—the entire cake! We always carry our own soap when we are travelling. Besides, they manufacture it so badly in these foreign towns! Stay, I'll bring you a piece. No? Well, just as you please; but I warn you of the consequences. Good night! Good night! Schlafen sie wohl! Ha! ha! you will laugh at my miserable German, I dare say—GOOD NIGHT!”

She is gone, and, opening my window, I look up to the sky and the stars, and find no companionship in them. The noisy revellers in the inn parlour are singing in rude chorus, and rapping their drinking-horns to the measure—the church clocks are chiming confusedly—the hum and bustle of the town is audible all around—the broad river flows by, with the moonlight upon it.

A long time passes thus, and the inn is cleared at length of its visitors. The lights go out one by one from the windows in the street. The sounds of life ebb slowly into the silence of night. Only the foot of a patrol is heard

now and then upon the echoing pavement, and when next the clocks chime it is eleven that they strike, and all is very quiet.

Then a solitary voice, far away, is heard chanting the fragment of a hymn, and a little boat with a single sail glides down the current and through the path of the moonlight, like a swan.

I close the window now, and, creeping into bed, lay my cheek down upon the pillow, and let my tears flow on. It is the first time that I have wept for this sorrow, and I am thankful that I can weep at last.

But I am very lonely to-night—alas! very lonely.

CHAPTER XVI.

FROM BASLE TO OSTEND.

WE start next day, and travel from Basle to Mannheim, where we spend the night, and whence we depart by the Rhine-steamer in a blinding mist, at half-past four o'clock the following morning.

It is a very miserable journey for the first five hours. The Wigglesworths (who declare that one loses all the best of the scenery in the after-part of the boat,) have taken steerage places where there is no awning, very few seats, and a crowd of rough people. The air is raw and chill—the sky a dull uniform grey—and but for the warm cloak lined with sables, for which I am indebted to the munificence of Madame, I should be drenched in mist and spray.

Towards half-past nine o'clock the weather clears a little—the sun glints out momentarily now and then—some musicians at the other end of the vessel begin to play—passengers saunter to and fro along the damp decks, and some of the most picturesque of the Rhine scenery comes in sight.

At Coblenz the steward's bell rings. Hungry tourists

make a rush to dinner, and Mrs. Wallenstein Wigglesworth dispatches Count Nogodi to the gloomy depths of the cellar which is, by courtesy, entitled the fore-cabin, whence he presently emerges with the wicker-basket of large capabilities.

Mr. Wigglesworth, in his excitement, rubs his head all over, causing each particular hair to stand bolt upright—the Count brings a portmanteau, and, seating himself upon it, spreads his pocket-handkerchief over his knees and is hungry in silence—even the countenance of the fair Anna is expressive of a faint interest in the proceedings, and Mrs. Wigglesworth presides at the basket with a courtesy that is quite refreshing to witness.

“Now, my dears,” she says, looking round affectionately at us all—“Now, my dears, let us see what we have here! First of all, meat-pie. Shall I give you a piece of meat-pie, dear Mademoiselle Natalie!—it is the same pie that you liked so much the night before last at Basle, and, fortunately, is not all gone yet! Five little rolls—a small Schabzieger cheese—a pot of fresh butter—a bag of cakes (my own pepper-cakes)—and a bottle of *be*—autiful Gräfenberger wine! Well, if we can’t make a delightful little dinner of all this, I think we shall indeed be difficult to please! Count Stanislaus, a little bit of this cheese! Ah, Wigglesworth, dear, do you remember poor Captain Opoſski, how fond he was of Schabzieger cheese? A delicious creature, dear Mademoiselle! quite a genius, and guileless as a baby. He was a Polish exile of distinction—stayed for some weeks with us when we resided at Heidelberg, and was *so* fond of Anna. He left us quite suddenly one day (for political reasons), and we have never seen or heard anything of him since. By the bye, Wigglesworth, dear, that was the very day upon which we so unaccountably lost our silver tea-pot! A great loss, Count Nogodi—a great loss! It was a noble tea-pot—had been an heirloom in the Wigglesworth family for upwards of *five-and-twenty* years, and was given to Mr. Wigglesworth’s mother by her uncle, the Reverend Elias Silverskin, who married the second cousin of Sir

Barnsbury Parkes, the Tory member. Wigglesworth, it is your place, dear, to help the wine! Count Nogodi, you don't eat!" (the Count looks as though he should be very happy to eat, if there were any possible resource open to him except that of descending upon the plates of his neighbours). "Anna, my angel, I should like to see you with as good an appetite every day—we must live upon something else, you know, as well as love! Dear Mademoiselle, do you enjoy your little dinner *al fresco*? This charming German air makes *me* vulgarly hungry, and it is *so* pleasant to sit here in this cosy way, and see the exquisite panorama as we pass! Now, is it not a thousand times more agreeable than to go down among thirty or forty people into a close warm cabin, where all the dishes are half cold, and one never gets anything one likes to eat, and has to pay three and twopence English for it, without wine? Besides, they never provide half enough for the people on board these boats—never! Ah, there's Andernach! Anna, my darling, tell the dear Count all about that delightfully poetical day that we spent last summer at Andernach, when we lost our provision-basket, and got no dinner till our return to Neuwied at eight o'clock in the evening! Wigglesworth, dear, as we seem to have finished the contents of our basket, perhaps you will kindly put it away with the rest of the luggage. Dear! dear! I am afraid we shall have more rain before long!"

And I fear so too, for the dark clouds are once more gathering all around, and those who had laid aside their waterproofed cloaks and paletots begin to look up to the sky and put them on again. Presently a tremendous shower comes down, and the Wigglesworths are fain to take refuge in the fore-cabin. My cloak is thick, so I prefer to stay and defy the weather; and, sitting thus upon the almost deserted deck, I catch a glimpse of Count Nogodi devouring an enormous block of black bread at the door of the caboose.

Thus it rains and rains without intermission up to half-past six o'clock, when we stop alongside the wharf at Cologne, and prepare to land. Our luggage is all piled together in one

spot; but the porter who shoulders my box is not permitted to touch a single package belonging to my companions.

"Not for the world, thank you, dear Mademoiselle," pants Mrs. Wigglesworth, looking very red, and staggering feebly forward between two domineering carpet-bags, which bump against everybody's legs, and get in her own way every minute—"Not for the world! Our luggage is so trifling—only three carpet-bags, one box, and the wicker-basket—that we always carry it ourselves when we are travelling. It spares an enormous expense; and, what is still more important, we know that it is safe. Oh really, Count, I am ashamed to trouble *you*, when you have your own portmanteau to take care of! Well, then, if you *will* have something, there's the wicker-basket. Wigglesworth! are you coming with the box and the black bag? Anna, darling, I left the umbrellas and shawls and the portfolio to your care! Oh dear, what a long distance it is along these quays, and how these porters annoy one! *Nein*, I tell you, *nein*!"

And so, in ludicrous procession, with Mrs. Wigglesworth at the head besieged by porters and struggling with the bags, we toil through rain and mud, and reach at last the Hotel du Dôme, a rambling, dingy, unsatisfactory sort of third-rate house close by the cathedral, where I obtain a tolerably pleasant chamber at the front, and, taking upon myself to order a plentiful and substantial tea, invite the party to be my guests for the evening—a proposition which is productive of general satisfaction, especially to Mr. Wigglesworth and the Count, who were just on the point of setting out on a foraging expedition with umbrellas and the wicker-basket.

The entertainment passes off admirably. Cutlets, dried salmon, cakes, toast and eggs disappear like provisions in a pantomime, and Mrs. Wigglesworth does me the favour to head the table. After tea we have just time to go round the exterior of the unfinished cathedral, and, retiring early to rest, set off the next morning for Aix-la-Chapelle.

And thus, day by day, we travel on. Anna, as ever, has very little to say, and that little is said to the Count in whispers. The Count is always polite, and never loses his presence of mind or his appetite for an instant. Mr. Wigglesworth does all the purveying and light portorage of the party, and is constantly either feeding or emptying the hungry pockets of the blue and black jacket. As for Mrs. Wigglesworth, like Eve, "on hospitable thoughts intent," she occupies herself in scraping together all imaginable waifs and strays, with an acute eye to the public good. All the pieces of sugar left in the hotel sugar-basins, all the ends of candle remaining in our respective chamber-candlesticks, all the contents of pepper-boxes and salt-cellar are consigned to little cones of brown paper, and (with everything that is left in the way of bread and meat) carried away in the basket for further consumption. Nor is this all. When it does chance that we put up at a tolerably respectable hotel where they place writing-materials in the travellers' rooms, Mrs. Wigglesworth embraces the opportunity with consummate skill, and replenishes her ink-bottle, wafer-box, and paper-case at the expense of her host. She likewise "gets up" pocket-handkerchiefs, false-collars, and other trifles in the seclusion of her own chamber, and hangs them out to dry, on fine nights, from her bedroom window—which accounts for the rough effect of the family linen.

It is the evening of the fifth day when we arrive at Ostend, which looks flat and unprofitable enough. We leave our luggage at the luggage-office, and I walk to and fro upon one of the high wooden piers while the Wigglesworths explore the neighbourhood in search of cheap lodgings.

The autumn winds blow coldly now towards nightfall, and there is a thick vapour gathering over the sea, which lashes up far beneath my feet and breaks against the sturdy piles with a moaning that seems almost to echo the melancholy voice in my own desolate heart. Dusk gathers slowly round—the Ostend light gleams out to

ships at sea—a steamer comes labouring up with a red lamp at her prow, and the fishermen are putting off in their little boats by the shore.

Strange that I should so dread crossing that ocean-road to-morrow! Strange that yon seventy miles of salt foam should appear so to seal my exile, and that my affections should cling thus, as it were, to the very soil of the Continent! I am virtually as much an alien to-night on this Ostend pier as I shall be to-morrow night in the streets of London—yet how different!

Oh my fair Switzerland! oh my dear native Fribourg, lying so stilly in the circling arm of the pleasant Saarine, how can it be that thou art still the same, whilst I, thy child, stand here with the spray upon my cheek looking towards the land of the stranger? Even now, at this gentle hour when the labour of the day is past and the cows are driven out to the pasturages, the young men and maidens are gathering round thy bubbling fountains, or loitering hand in hand beside the river—the light streams out from the forge of Arnold Zeller, and flickers down upon the water like a torch inverted—the organ is pealing through the dim aisles of St. Nicholas—the priests are chanting an evening service in the little chapel at the foot of Madame's garden—and she, perchance, and Louis are——

I can pursue the theme no farther.

Just then Mrs. Wigglesworth comes up and leads me away in triumph. They have found charming lodgings—exactly what they wanted—commanding such a sweet view of—the bathing-machines! The sitting-room, to be sure, is somewhat small, and the Count's sleeping apartment is nothing but a closet, which will have to serve them for lumber-room and larder as well; but then the situation is heavenly, and everything is so surpassingly clean, and the terms *so* reasonable! Only seven francs a week without attendance or cooking—which of course they will do for themselves, for the sake of amusement!

CHAPTER XVII.

A NIGHT OF PERIL.

So! it is over, and the little group upon the pier has grown so small that I can no longer distinguish strangers from friends. The steamer creaks and pants and speeds along—shore and piers and housetops on the flat coast seem to sink lower and lower into the sea—presently all has disappeared—there is “nothing before and nothing behind but the sky and the ocean,” and all that remains to me of the whilom companionship of Mrs. Wallenstein Wigglesworth is a bag of pepper-cakes affectionately thrust upon me at parting!

On and on, over the wide sea! It was very early morning when I started—it is past mid-day when the white cliffs come in sight, and we land at Dover.

Now a weary delay at the custom-house, where the contents of my box are rudely overturned, and my little wood-carving—Laurent’s farewell gift—is handed from one official to another, and, after much questioning and consulting, is at last returned to me and suffered to pass free. Now the stage-coach and the novel landscape. Every minute farther and farther away!

It is a sweet English country through which I journey in the warm afternoon.

On, still on, past old farm-houses with quaint gables and wreathed chimneys, mossied barns and fruitful orchards—past slopes and valleys richly cultivated—past green meadows and winding rivers bordered by silvery pollards—past quiet nooks set round with flowering hedges and enclosing tiny ponds, with dreamy cattle lying all around—past lines of old red wall, and pleasant cottages with the sunset burning brightly in the diamond panes of their little casements—past old churches, mouldering tranquilly away, like the dead that slumber in their withied graves beneath the shade of the old towers—past little villages, and bowling-greens, and rosy children swinging upon

gates—past straggling towns, and water-mills, and green fields white with sheep—and then dusk again. Dusk followed by darkness, showing now and then a town and a lighted inn. More lights by and bye. Long rows of them crossing the distance and bordering all the road. A closer atmosphere—a decrease of speed—a yard filled with people—a sound of many vehicles. London!

Alighting with the rest, I found myself in the midst of a busy crowd, all foreign, all strange, and all intent upon their own business. I stood looking around me in helpless dismay. No one spoke to me. No one looked at me. Some were hurrying away with their luggage, and some were welcomed by waiting friends. One little boy, especially, who had travelled beside me all the way from Canterbury, was lifted out of the coach by his mother, and greeted with a burst of tears and kisses. It was by a great effort that I restrained my own tears at this sight, and there is no describing the sense of desolation that weighed upon my heart. Presently I saw my box handed off the roof, claimed, and stood beside it, and knew not what next to do. Was nobody coming to meet me?

The horses were taken out now and led away. The travellers went away in cabs and coaches. I alone stood in sad bewilderment under a lamp, waiting and forgotten. Then I thought that the coach might have come in to-night before its time, and that some one would arrive shortly, so, being very weary, I sat down patiently upon my box and looked about me.

Up at the farther end of the yard, seen dimly by the light of an oil-lamp and a couple of lanterns, stood the horses, which a couple of ostlers were divesting of their harness, and otherwise attending to in a bustling, whistling, careless sort of way. In a little dim office at the opposite side of the passage leading into the street beyond, I saw the coachman, the guard, some porters, and a clerk, busily sorting and writing upon a quantity of parcels and hampers that were still being unladen, one by one, and flung in upon the office floor. Round about this office, making a little lane for the porters and packages, a number

of persons stood, quite filling up the space between the coach and the door. All were waiting for parcels which they expected, and what with the calling out of names and addresses, the disputes about carriage, and the difficulties respecting change, there was a confusion indeed.

Amongst this crowd, my attention became, somehow or another, attracted very particularly towards one individual. I could not help looking at her, though I could not tell why I did so; and she, apparently, could not help looking at me, for she turned her head several times, and observed me attentively—always glancing away in another direction, however, if her eyes encountered mine. She was a short, stout, elderly person, with reddish hair and white eyelashes. She carried a basket on her arm; was meanly dressed, and had a droop in one eyelid, which lent an unfavourable cunning look to her face, as though she were winking.

Presently I heard her ask if a box had arrived for her, but the reply was indistinct, and then she came round by the back of the coach, and crossed over to where I was sitting.

"Are you a-waitin' for anybody or lookin' for anythink, my dear?" she said, peering into my face.

"Thank you," I said, coldly, "I am expecting somebody?"

"Maybe," she replied, holding her head a little on one side, "you are a-waitin' for me!"

I looked up in astonishment, and made no answer.

"You're a foreigner, ain't you, my dear?"

I replied in the affirmative.

"And your name—what may that be?"

"Natalie Metz."

"Why, that's just right, then!" she exclaimed. "I've been here ever so often, looking out for you, and to-night I'd almost given you up!"

"How?" I said, half rising, and sitting down again. "Are—are you the person who was to meet me here?"

"To be sure I am," she replied, promptly. "I'm Mrs. Jones."

I repeated the name vaguely after her. An indefinable something in her voice and eyes troubled me, and I mistrusted her, I could not tell wherefore.

"And now then," said Mrs. Jones, rubbing her hands together in a manner meant to be cheerful, "we'd better be off as soon as possible, and you can tell me the news as we go along. Is this all the luggage you've got with you?"

And she stooped down, examined the label, and tried the weight of my box.

"Yes," I replied, "that is all; but had we not better wait a few minutes longer?"

"Wait!" echoed Mrs. Jones, sharply. "What for?"

"To—to see if anybody else is coming," I answered, timidly.

"Who else should come but me?" asked Mrs. Jones, turning red. "Do you expect anybody else?"

"Really," I said, hesitatingly, "I don't know."

"Have you many friends in London?"

"None, but yourself; and I suppose you will see me off again to-morrow, wont you, Mrs. Jones?"

"Oh, to-morrow!" she repeated. "Why need you be in such a hurry?"

"Because Madame's sister will be expecting me," I replied. "Is it far from London where she lives?"

"Oh yes, a long way," said Mrs. Jones. "A very long way indeed. I s'pose you've got her address, haven't you?"

I pointed, by way of answer, to my box. Mrs. Jones nodded.

"Ah, well!" she said, "we'll see about that by and bye. You'll go home with me for to-night, at all events, and then you know you can go or stay to-morrow as you please. My place ain't far from here. We might almost walk there, if it wasn't for the box. At all events, you wont mind paying for a coach, I dare say. Come along! I'll call one, and we shall be there in a minute or two, — safe and comfortable."

I not wish to go with her. I would have given the

world that anything had occurred at that moment to give me an excuse for going to a hotel instead ; but, child that I was ! I could devise no expedient, and in another instant it was too late. She signalled to a coach, my box was lifted in, she muttered some address to the driver which was inaudible to me, took her seat by my side, and away we went through the crowded streets, all blazing with lights, and alive with passengers.

Once in the vehicle, a sort of weary torpor came upon me. I forgot my apprehensions, or, rather, I ceased to care about them. All I needed was rest—rest and quiet. Anything but streets, and noise, and shops ! Anything but motion and change !

“ Mine’s a very poor sort of place, my dear, for a young lady like you,” said Mrs. Jones, as we went along ; “ but it’s none the worse for that ; and though we are humble folks, we’re honest ; and you don’t seem as if you’d be hard to please either.”

“ Indeed I am not,” I said faintly. “ How did you know I was coming ? Did Madame write to you ?”

“ Yes—yes, I wrote to,” replied Mrs. Jones, looking out of the window, and speaking somewhat hastily.

“ And—and, please, who are you ? How does Madame happen to know you ?”

Mrs. Jones looked out of the window again.

“ I—I was housemaid in the family of one of her friends, my dear,” she replied, after a momentary pause ; “ but that was a long time ago. I’m a married woman now, and my husband’s name is William Jones, which his trade is an engine-driver on the Liverpool Railway. Did you never hear none of them speak of Mrs. Jones ?”

I shook my head and felt very sleepy, and my companion became all at once silent and absorbed. Then the coach turned aside from the great thoroughfare into a labyrinth of dark streets where there were hardly any lamps, and but few passengers. Here I fell into a half unconscious state, and have no remembrance of anything farther, till at length the coach stopped and Mrs. Jones got out.

"Here we are, my dear," said she. "You've got to pay the man. Two shillings is his fare, but he's sure to want half-a-crown. Have you got half-a-crown handy?"

"I really don't know," I said, taking out my purse. "I don't yet understand the value of your English money. Is this the coin?"

"No, that's a shilling. Here—s'pose you give me your purse and let me pay him, while you get out. Lord! how dishonest folks might rob you!"

And Mrs. Jones took it from my hand, opened the door of her house with a latch-key, helped the driver to carry my box into the passage, and, when she had satisfied him, put my purse in her pocket.

I followed her into a bare dreary room, dimly lighted by a hollow fire.

"It don't look none of the cheerfulest at present," said Mrs. Jones, bustling about, and lighting a candle as she spoke; "but it will be more lively when the fire gets up. I s'pose you'd like a bit of supper now, wouldn't you?"

"Thank you," I said, shivering, "I am only cold and tired, and I don't care for anything to eat. I think I would rather go to bed, if you please."

"You can't just yet, then," replied Mrs. Jones, shortly. "The bed's got to be made; and before I make it, I must eat my supper. I've been out ever since two o'clock, and that's enough to make one hungry, I can tell you. I'm sure," she continued, bringing a loaf and some cold meat from a corner cupboard—"I'm sure my life's anything but easy, with a husband that's a journeyman printer, out all hours of the day and night. . . ."

"A printer!" I interrupted. "You told me he was an engine-driver!"

"Did I?" said Mrs. Jones, looking somewhat confused, and glancing up at me again from under the queer eyelid. "Well, of course I did! Don't they work printin' by steam, and don't my husband work the engine? Why, any one might ha' seen what I meant with half an eye!"

"I beg your pardon," I replied. "I understand you now."

Mrs. Jones received this apology with a dissatisfied look and a sort of grunt, and went on eating voraciously.

I wished to conciliate her, and presently (as soon as I could think of anything to say) I spoke again.

"What part of London do you call this?" I asked.

She looked up at me sharply, and laid down her knife and fork.

"What can that matter to you now?"

"Not much, certainly," I replied; "but I am a stranger, and I wish to know."

"Oh, of course, of course," said she, more civilly. "Well, my dear, this here's called—called Bayswater. You'll remember that, wont you? Bayswater."

I repeated it after her, but with an odd feeling of distrust for which I could not account. Somehow or another I did not believe that the name of the place was Bayswater—or that her husband was what she had told me. I began to be alarmed.

Perhaps my countenance betrayed a portion of what was passing through my mind, for Mrs. Jones smiled upon me again in her unpleasant manner, and, rising from table, said she would go up and see after my room directly.

I was glad when she was gone, and sat looking moodily at the embers, and thinking what I should do on the morrow. With Mrs. Jones I was resolved not to stay another day. It surprised me that Madame should have consigned me to the care of such a person. She said she had been a servant. This might be true; but I was racked by indefinable doubts, and longed to get away. I then remembered with terror that it was she who had asked me my name and destination—that I had myself given all the clues, and that I had no guarantee whatever for the truth of any of her assertions. How should I escape? Supposing that I strolled out on the morrow, as if for a walk, and returned for my box with a cab? This was evidently my best plan, in case she should refuse to bring me a vehicle. In the mean time I must show no suspicion, and make the best of my situation. Looking round at the bare walls and wretched furniture, I shud-

dered. What a contrast to the refined luxury of the home I had left! What if this woman were a robber by profession? What if—

Three or four heavy blows dealt upon the outer door set the window-shutters shaking, and sent the sudden blood up to my brow. My heart beat in spite of me, and I involuntarily started up and held my breath. Scarcely had the echo of the first summons died off when the strokes were repeated, louder and heavier than before.

"In Heaven's name, what's that?" I exclaimed, as Mrs. Jones hurried through the room, and proceeded to unfasten the door.

"It's only my husband," she replied, as a heavy foot crossed the threshold. "Well, Bill, I guess you'd like to batter the door down next time! Come, be civil, here's a new lodger in the parlour!"

A tall, powerful man, with a dogged but not unhandsome countenance, came into the room before she had done speaking. He seemed, from what I could see, to have thrust her rudely on one side and entered before her. He carried a heavy stick and a basket containing some kind of iron tools, and giving them, without a word, into her hands, flung his hat upon the floor, drew a chair close to the fire, acknowledged my presence with a sullen nod and a long stare, and said impatiently—

"Now, then, am I to have any supper to-night?"

"There it is," replied the wife, pointing to the table. "You can feed yourself, I s'pose!"

"What, nothing but that? Nothing hot?"

"Nothing else," said the woman, half apologetically. "I've been out all day, and we're only just in, me and the young woman."

He made no reply, but going over to the table cut the loaf in halves, placed the whole of the meat upon his plate, and with them returned to the fire and ate sulkily, looking up at me now and then with a mingled expression of curiosity and ill-temper.

"Wouldn't you like to go to bed, my dear?" asked Mrs. Jones, anxiously. "The room's all ready."

"What do you want to hurry the young woman to bed for?" said her husband, turning sharply upon her. "She ain't had no talk along with me yet, have you, my dear?"

"But she said she was tired," expostulated Mrs. Jones. "She said she wanted to go to——"

"Hold your tongue, and be hanged!" interrupted the man, savagely. "I'm master here, ain't I? I say she shan't go to bed. I say she *don't* want to go to bed—do you, my dear?"

"Not, not directly, sir," I faltered, trembling from head to foot, and scarcely knowing what I said.

"There now! If she's a mind to sit up a bit and enjoy my company, what's that to you, I should like to know? Here—give me a pipe—d'ye hear?"

He, as it were, flung the words at his wife, who handed him a pipe and sat down at the other side of the table. He filled, lit, and smoked it in silence for a long time, during which no one spoke or moved. Then he stared at me again, and, somewhat softening his voice, said—

"Well now, what part of the country do you come from?"

"I am not English," I replied. "I come from Switzerland, and I crossed the sea this morning."

I had schooled myself by this time—made up my mind what I should do, and looked at him as I spoke with an affectation of fearless unsuspicion which I was far enough from feeling.

"Oh, a foreigner, are you? Well, I thought you spoke queer-like, but I didn't guess you was a foreigner. What's your name?"

"Natalie Metz."

"Natalie—Natalie! It's a pretty name, tho' I never heard it afore." Here he puffed away for some minutes, during which he never removed his eyes from my face. "And you're a pretty gal, too," he added presently. "What are you goin' to do in London, eh?—Goin' into service?"

"I have a letter to a lady in the country, somewhere

by the sea," I replied; "and I am going to live with her."

"Into the country!" he repeated. "Well, you mustn't go yet awhile! See a little of London first, you know! I shan't let you go away just yet. I like your looks, and I think you and me'll be very good friends."

He smiled insolently at me as he said this, and I felt myself crimsoning with fear and anger. Here Mrs. Jones came to my aid.

"Come, Bill," she said, soothingly, "why don't you let the young lady go to bed? You can see she's tired, and she'll be able to keep up better another time. I'm sure you'd like to—wouldn't you, my dear?"

"Indeed, yes," I replied, taking courage, and rising as I spoke. "I have been a long journey to-day, and I am very much fatigued."

"Oh well, I don't want to make *myself* disagreeable," said he, rising also, and holding out his great horny hand to me as I passed. "I'm always agreeable, I am, and that's more than any one can say of you, old woman! Good night, my dear—shake hands—and"—here he bent his face down close to mine—"and I wouldn't let you go so soon to-night, only that you're tired, and the old woman's jealous!"

Here he wrung the hand which I dared not refuse to give him, and bursting into a horse-laugh resumed his seat and his pipe as I left the room.

It was a tolerably comfortable bed-chamber into which she preceded me, and contained some chairs, a table, a curtained bed, and even some pieces of carpet.

"This is a room we've been in the habit of letting," said the woman, observing me look round. "Is there anything more you'll be likely to want before I go?"

She spoke in a harsh, uncivil tone, and kept looking at me under the drooping eyelid with the white lashes.

I wanted my box; but I dared not say so, lest her husband should have to bring it up, as doubtless he would have done, since it weighed heavily; so I said, "Nothing, thank you—good night."

She made me no answer; but turned away, and banged the door behind her.

My first impulse was to secure the bolt.

I might have guessed it! There was no key in the lock, and no bolt anywhere!

I dropped upon a seat, and covered my face with my hands.

God of Mercy! what was to become of me?

To go to bed—to sleep, was out of the question. The candle was but freshly lighted—would burn, perhaps, for four or five hours. I resolved to sit up all night.

There was silence down-stairs—dead silence—for a long time. Then I heard them talking. I could distinguish his voice from hers all through. Loud at first, they grew lower presently, and then sunk to a faint murmuring, which reached me only at intervals. I rose, crossed the floor softly, turned the handle slowly and noiselessly, and by degrees opened the door, and crept out upon the landing. I think I must have been nearly a quarter of an hour accomplishing this.

At first I could distinguish nothing of what they said. By and bye, when my ear grew more familiar with the sounds, I caught a few words here and there.

"A real lady, I tell you—coach-office—plenty of money."

They were speaking of me!

"The box is heavy—out in the passage—too much noise."

Here a long delay, and the whispering so low that I could catch nothing. Then I heard the door opened, and their footsteps in the passage. Then they returned more slowly, and laid some heavy object cautiously on the floor. My box! Then a measured sound, as of some iron instrument grating, grating!

"Hush! she'll hear you!"

It was the woman's voice.

"Not she! She's too tired to be lyin' awake at this hour. Curse the lock, how hard it is! There!"

It was opened now, and all was still again, save some-

times a smothered exclamation, or the sound of something being placed upon the table. They were emptying it. Then I heard a faint chinking, as of money, and the voices began again.

"I tell you I'll do as I please. I like the gal, and I'll stand her friend, and I should like to see who'll dare to ill-use her then! D—— you, you jealous witch! I say she shall be well-treated! You've got the clothes—ain't you satisfied with them? I'll have the money and the gal too, if I choose, and who's to prevent me? What, wont you be still?"

"You'll be heard!" she said in a frightened whisper.

"I don't care if I am. There, get to bed with you—I've a mind to stop here to-night."

"Wont you go to bed at all, Bill?"

"That's my business. Get away with you."

I heard her advancing footsteps, and, hastily retreating, closed my door and blew the candle out. On the landing she paused and listened. She might almost have heard the beating of my heart. I heard it. Then the steps passed on to an upper story, and all was still.

I was in darkness now—utter darkness, and that fearful man below, within a few yards' distance! Alas! alas! what had I done that I should fall into this den of peril? I sank upon my knees beside the bed, and tried to pray; but terror had so absorbed my every faculty that I could frame no words—summon no thoughts. After kneeling there for a long interval, I rose again, and again stole out upon the landing.

All was intensely quiet. I could hear the ticking of the clock in the room below.

By and bye—when I had stood there, perhaps, for nearly an hour, I became aware of a sound of heavy breathing, long, regular breathing, as of some one sleeping profoundly.

A sudden thought of escape flashed through me!

Would it be possible, now, to creep down the narrow stairs, pass that dreaded room, open the street-door noiselessly, and get away, away into the free streets beyond?

And if he were to wake?

I trembled—I paused—I listened. Still the heavy breathing—heavier now than ever! I resolved to try.

I had still my cloak upon me, but my bonnet was left down-stairs—in the very room where he was. Well, I must go without a bonnet. Better anything than remain here!

Slowly—slowly I made my way down, one step at a time. When I had got about half way, a stair creaked. I stopped and listened.

Nothing stirred.

One by one—one by one. Is this the last? I try it with my foot, and find a straw mat. Yes, I remember now, there was a straw mat at the bottom. Straight across the passage gleams a faint light from the room whence comes the sound of his respirations. Surely they are not so loud now? Tut!—it is but my fancy.

On, by noiseless degrees, to the very door, where I peep in fearfully. He is sitting at the table, with his head dropped upon his folded arms, sleeping soundly. Yonder lies my bonnet, on a chair not far from the door, and there, close—close at his elbow, beside the guttering candle, stands my little wood-carving—my Joan of Arc!

Whence comes my courage? I know not; but all fear has left me now in the moment of my utmost danger. Step by step I come up and stand beside him—secure the figure in one hand, with the other place my bonnet on my head—cast one glance at my little treasures lying scattered everywhere upon the floor and table—creep back again, like my own shadow on the wall, and gain the street-door.

No, I can't do it with the figure in my arm. I am forced to place it down upon the ground, and take both hands to the lock.

The key is rusty, and grates as I turn it. Hush!

He sleeps on. I can still hear him.

Now the door yields—a breath of the blessed air, the free air, comes in upon my cheek!

Up with the little figure, and out, out into the street beyond, leaving the door wide open behind me!

On, and on, and on! Up one street and down another!
On in the darkness!—It is God's night, and under His
skies I am safe again!

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BLUE LION.

RUNNING, always running—choosing ever between two turnings that which seemed to branch farthest away—flitting like a ghost past the few stragglers whom I chanced now and then to encounter, and never heeding where I went, so that it was only forward, I fled on like a hunted hare, till throbbing brain and trembling limbs, and a heart beating as if it must break, compelled me to pause at last. I clung to a railing for support, closed my eyes upon the reeling streets, and after a few moments, during which all was silent, opened them again, and looked around me.

It seemed to be a neighbourhood of new streets, seen in this grey dawning coming up the East. Many of the houses were yet fenced round by scaffoldings—some were mere shells and skeletons, doorless and windowless—some, again, were all complete, curtained, and tenanted, with a clean, prim look upon them, like a row of newly-bound books.

This, I could see, was not the part of London which I wanted. I would get back, if possible, to the coach-office, and there ascertain if Mrs. Jones were known. At all events, I must find some hotel where I could stay, either till my property was recovered, or till I could write and receive a letter from Madame de Wald.

For all was gone—all! Clothes, money, pocket-book, letter—all!

Well! It was of no use to stay there thinking of it! I gathered my cloak more closely round me, and set forward again in the chill morning.

More unfinished streets, with heaps of brick and sand, and great white vessels filled with mortar. Now a Gothic

building, standing back from the road in a drear garden—now a row of cellars, where more houses will be built by and bye—now some market-grounds, and scattered villas, and bare fields—and beyond these what seemed, in that dim light, to be the open country.

Nay, then! I was indeed straying widely of the place I sought! What was to be done next? How should I, in my weariness, retrace the miles that must lie between the office and this place? How exist without food during the long day which would elapse before I could arrive there?

First of all, though, I must rest awhile. I felt I could go no farther even if I would. Nothing to sit upon but the dusty road or the damp clay bank beside it—no matter for that! I sank down on the bank, where the clumped roots of a tree formed a rough kind of ledge, and, remembering the paper of pepper-cakes, began to eat, but was forced to throw the nauseous compound away at the first morsel.

So the morning dusk rolled off slowly, and the day came up and found me crouching there. Then some market-carts and wagons went by, laden with fresh fruits and vegetables for the town—by and bye a few people on foot. Still, despite the wandering glances cast upon me, and the spoken remarks of men driving past, I sat with my head bowed on my hands, and had no strength to move.

And now, to the burning craving of hunger and the yet more intolerable plague of thirst, succeeded a heavy numbness. My hands and feet grew stone cold, and I longed to lie down and sleep away the little life left in me.

A church clock near at hand struck five. I had not tasted food for seventeen hours!"

This thought partly roused me. Surely I was too young to die yet—to die of starvation and fatigue—to die like a dog by the roadside!

Involuntarily I put my hand in my pocket, and found a few pence at the bottom. Life was worth an effort at all events; so I forced myself once more to rise, and, remembering that I had seen no inn or shop for a long way

back, made up my mind to go on yet a little farther, in the hope of finding some place where I might purchase a loaf and beg a glass of water.

Once sustain life—once get back to the busy city, and I felt assured I should be safe. I had valuables, too, upon my person. A small gold watch (Madame's present on my fifteenth birthday), a brooch, my rich cloak, and a ring that Louis had given to me about a fortnight since. These things would be my guarantee for payment at any hotel. If it came to the worst, I could even sell them.

Sell them! Two days—ay—eighteen hours ago, I should have loathed the idea of selling gifts like those! I could think of it now, tottering feebly up that lone highway, and sternly turn it over in my mind. Hunger is a great tamer of pride, and a strange leveller of delicate sentiment!

There were fields at either side, with stately houses standing back in high-walled gardens, and opening to the road with avenues and lodges every here and there. It was a weary hill, and I thought I should never reach the top. Arriving there, however, after many pauses, I saw it sheer down steeply at the other side, bordered by fields and hedges all the way, with a cluster of small houses at the foot, an ivied church-tower peeping over the tree-tops, and a rustic inn with bay windows that glittered in the fitful sunlight.

Rejoiced as I was to see it, I had to rest before I went farther. Then I strove to smooth my tangled hair with my hands, wiped the dust from my face, and went on.

It was a pretty little inn, overgrown with roses; encrusted under the eaves with swallows'-nests; sheltered by a row of old elms; backed by warm stables and brown stacks; and fronted by a horse-trough, and a swinging sign representative of a Blue Lion.

Just outside the porch was a stone seat, and just before the door an ostler washing the wheels of a gig.

My first impulse was to enter the inn—my second to sink down upon the stone bench, and wait till some one addressed me. The ostler stopped in his occupation and

stared at me. Presently he came over, and, touching his cap, said—

“What may your pleasure be, ma’am?”

“I have walked a long way,” I said, “and I am tired and hungry. Can I have something to eat here?”

“Certainly, ma’am. Will you walk into the parlour?”

Into the parlour, with but a few copper coins to pay my reckoning! I felt myself blush as I answered him.

“I only want a little bread and cheese, and a glass of water, thank you. Can I have them here?”

“Oh, yes!—if you like,” said the man, opening his eyes to their utmost width, and retreating to the inn-door. Here he stopped, and calling to some one within, muttered some words in an under-tone. A portly, rosy man, with a white apron, then came to the porch and looked at me—and then they whispered again—and then the new comer spoke.

“Would you not prefer to step in, ma’am?” he said, politely. “You can have breakfast served to you in the parlour, if you please. Coffee, tea, eggs, anything you choose.”

I shook my head, and showed him the pence in my hand.

“I have been robbed,” I replied; “robbed of both money and clothes, and this is all that I have left. Unless, indeed,” and here I held my brooch towards him, “unless, indeed, you like to trust me, and will keep this till I can pay you!”

The landlord took the trinket and turned it over in his hand with a puzzled look.

“Really,” he said, hesitatingly, “I—I don’t know what to say. It’s a strange story. I’ll speak to my wife.”

And so he went away, and several minutes passed. And now, whether it were the additional excitement, or the effort of speaking, or the added fatigue, anxiety, and sense of shame combined, I do not know, but a sudden dizziness came upon me and a deadly sickness. I rose, fell back again upon the seat, and saw the landscape swim before me.

"For shame, husband, to let the poor thing stay here a moment!" cried a woman's voice close at my side. "Didn't you see she was fainting away? Here, help to bring her in directly, some of you!"

With these words I felt a strong arm round my waist—was sensible of being carried along by two persons, of having my hands and forehead bathed in vinegar, of a warm air, and of a confusion of many voices—and then, becoming gradually clearer, found myself lying back in a great chair before a blazing fire, surrounded by a crowd of pitying faces.

"There, there, don't speak, dear!" said a middle-aged woman, with a round kindly face. "Don't ye speak now! It's all right, and you're quite safe, and you'll be better presently. Where's the brandy for her?"

Some one standing by handed her a glass of brandy and water steaming hot, which she, with her own friendly hands, gave to me a spoonful at a time, with now and then a morsel of sopped bread. A very little sufficed for me, and I shook my head feebly. I was too weak for it, and I contrived to say so in a whisper.

"Poor dear! poor dear! and yet you look to want it badly enough!"

"I have—I have eaten nothing since yesterday at noon," I answered; "nor been in bed all night."

"Susan!" cried the landlady in a frenzy of compassion, "run up this moment, and warm the bed in Number Four! Poor dear creature! Well, I never heard the like!"

"I came yesterday from Belgium," I pursued, faintly; "and was deceived by a woman who—who pretended to let lodgings."

"And she robbed you, the wretch?"

I bent my head in reply, and swallowed another spoonful of the brandy and water.

"I escaped from her house," I said, "in the middle of the night. I have been walking ever since. I want to get back to London by and bye, if I can, and try to—to recover what I have lost."

"You will not be able to go back to-day, young lady," said a harsh voice close beside me.

It was a short, sallow, hard-featured, elderly man, with very bright black eyes and a profusion of iron-grey hair hanging in great masses over his forehead and almost down to his shoulders. I had not observed him before, and, ill as I was, there was something in his countenance that struck me, even then.

"I will try," I said, "when I am better."

"Excuse me, but I think it impossible, unless you ride all the way. Are you a Belgian by birth?"

"I am a Swiss," I replied, with a sigh.

The stranger ran his fingers through his long hair, and looked at me with a sort of grave compassion; then, unbuckling a knapsack from his shoulders, said,—

"Landlord, I have changed my mind. You can prepare a bed for me. I shall not go any farther to-day."

He then added some words in an under-tone, which caused the landlord to glance from him to me more than once, and, when he had done, went out into the porch, lighted a large meerschaum, took a book from his pocket, and sat there reading.

Shortly after this, my kind landlady helped me up to a pretty room smelling sweetly of the country air, where she put me to bed, and bidding me ring for her when I woke again, so left me.

Lying there at rest with the fresh sheets touching my cheek, and the heavy crimson curtains drawn closely all around, a sense of deep peace comes upon me. I am too weary and weak to think either of the past or the future, and, sensible only of the safe and blessed present, sink smilingly to sleep in the red gloom.

Partially waking now and again, I seem to hear a cautious footstep retreating from the chamber-door, or catch a glimpse of a woman's pleasant face between the curtains. And so, feeling that I am watched and cared for, I turn to sleep again, and again float out upon that sunny ocean which is islanded by dreams.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE STEM AND THE BLOSSOM.

It was very pleasant sitting there in the porch of the Blue Lion, propped by cushions, with the ruddy afternoon sun bronzing the church tower behind the trees, and touching with fire the boughs of the old elms fronting the doorway.

I felt comparatively well, but still much exhausted, and leaned back in a happy musing mood, listening to the cawing of the rooks and to the blackbird in the bar, who hopped from perch to perch of his wicker cage, and seemed beside himself for joy of the merry sunshine.

Every now and again the landlord, or his wife, or one of the maids, would come out to me with a cheerful smile, and ask how I was going on now, and if I would like a morsel more of that roast fowl, or a cup of tea, or a glass of new milk from the milking pail; and by and bye the grey-haired stranger, whom I had not seen since the early morning, came up with a fishing-rod and his book, and, finding me so much better, shook hands, and sat down at the opposite side of the porch.

"I am glad," he said, "to read by your countenance that you are recovering. Do you object to the smell of tobacco?"

On my replying promptly in the negative, he brought out the great meerschaum again and filled it from a small leathern bag. There was something very methodical and leisurely in all his actions, even to the long slow puffs in which he exhaled the smoke. He kept his arms folded and his eyes fixed on the ground, and seldom looked at me, even when he spoke. This gave me an opportunity for observing him more narrowly, which I did with some curiosity.

He was an older man than I had, at the first glance, supposed. Judging from the lines about his mouth and eyes, and the deep groove between his brows, I should say

that he was fifty-five or six at least; the forehead was broad and knotted, very prominent over the eyes, and widening far back at the temples; and this, with the firm jaw beneath, gave a characteristic weight and squareness to the whole face. His eyes, overshadowed by thick brows, were large, round, and very black, and looked as if they could be fiery as well, if ever his quiet mood were roused to sudden anger. His nose was short and rather aquiline—his mouth and lips somewhat compressed, the lower lip being more prominent than the upper—his height neither above nor beneath that of most men. Altogether he was a rugged, shaggy, stern-looking individual enough, with a world of power, too, in that grim countenance of his, which, by the way, did a little resemble the portraits of Augustus W. Von Schlegel.

After a long pause, during which I had had abundant time to note all these things, he took the pipe from his mouth and said briefly—

“Tell me your history.”

“My history! What, from the beginning?”

“To the end,” he replied, leaning back and composing himself to listen.

There was something so odd and so peremptory in this command that I felt myself bound to obey; so I told him all my little story, omitting only the cause of my banishment. He heard me out in silence, and, when I had done, said—

“I believe every syllable of your recital, Natalie, and I am glad that this chanced to be Monday, or I should not have met you. Here, Mr. Scott!”

The landlord, who it seemed was Mr. Scott, came bustling out. The stranger directed his attention to a particular flagstone in the porch, and requested him to stand upon it, which Mr. Scott did, looking greatly puzzled.

“Landlord,” said the other, facing round to him very gravely and looking full in his eyes—“landlord, who am I?”

“Sir?” exclaimed Mr. Scott, with a face of unqualified amazement,

"Who am I?" repeated the stranger, pointing significantly to his own shirt-front. "I ask you simply, who am I?"

The landlord rubbed his bald head all over and stared helplessly. At length he said—

"Well, you're—you're Mr. Vaughan, sir."

"Keith Vaughan," observed the stranger, correcting him.

"Yes, sir, Mr. Keith Vaughan."

Mr. Vaughan turned to me, as if to draw my attention to the fact.

"You hear that, Natalie," he said. Then facing round to the landlord again—

"Now, Mr. Scott," he said, "what am I?"

"The regularst customer I ever had, sir—and the oldest—and a real gentleman, sir," responded the landlord, briskly.

"Pshaw! not that. I mean, *what* am I? What trade? What profession?"

"Why, you're in the musical line, sir. Leastwise, you—you play the organ every Sunday up at Ashford-brook Chapel. I should ha' thought, sir," added Mr. Scott, with the faintest indication of a smile dancing about the corners of his mouth, "that you was pretty well acquainted with these facts already."

"Have I a daughter, landlord?"

"The sweetest little cherub . . ." began Mr. Scott, enthusiastically.

"—Thank you," said the stranger, interrupting him; "that will do. I am obliged to you for your information, and will not detain you longer. Now, Natalie," he continued, dropping his voice, "I suppose you wonder why I have questioned that man?"

He called me Natalie, as if he had known me for years already!

"I did it," he continued, "that you might be satisfied of my respectability. I mean to take you home with me."

Here I interposed a faint exclamation; but he went on without heeding or looking at me, speaking always in the same harsh, steady, leisurely voice.

"I am but a poor man," he said, with a glance at his well-worn coat, "and live, poorly enough, by giving instruction in singing, and by playing every Sunday at a little country church about twelve miles from here. I walk both ways in even the roughest weather, and sleep at this inn on the Sunday night, starting for London about six o'clock next morning. I had my knapsack on my back, ready to go, when you came to-day. I have done this for the last twenty-five years, and never stopped here all day in my life till now. The reason that I did so," he added, lifting his eyes to me with the same expression of grave pity as before, "was, that I found here a young girl, and a foreigner, poorer than myself and more friendless. I live in town, and little Alice is my baby-house-keeper. I am her only companion—her only playmate. She will love you dearly."

I poured forth some broken words of gratitude, but he stopped me at once, saying—

"No thanks—no thanks. I have but shelter and food to give you. As long as you need them they are yours—but I will not be thanked for it."

After this he remained silent for a long time, and I dared not intrude upon his meditations. By and bye he re-commenced.

"Do you think you would be strong enough to go up to London this evening," he asked, "if you rode all the way?"

"I am sure I should," I replied, confidently. "I am quite well now."

"No, you are not," he said, shortly, and then puffed away again; adding, after a considerable interval—"You look tired."

"I am not tired," I said, eagerly. "I believe I could walk a long way."

"You could not walk to the top of that hill," said Mr. Vaughan, very decidedly. "And there is no need that you should. A wagon has put up here for a few hours on the way to town, and the driver has agreed to take us if you find yourself able to travel. There'll be plenty of fresh straw, and you can lie down all the way. Can you go?"

"Certainly," I replied. "When do we start?"

Mr. Vaughan looked at his watch—a heavy, old-fashioned machine in a pinchbeck case.

"It is now five o'clock," he said; "and the wagon was to have left here at half-past four. See! there it comes, and the driver is waiting to know my decision. Now, be quick, for we have no time to spare."

I hastened in as well as my weakness would let me, and coming back through the bar, was stopped by the landlord, who drew me aside into his parlour.

"Here, Miss," he said, "is your little ornament that you put into my hand this morning. "I don't want it, bless you; and anything you've had here you're as welcome to as the flowers in May. Here, Mrs. Scott, my dear! Here's the young lady waiting to wish you good-bye. Good-bye, Miss, good-bye!"

And the worthy couple ushered me out with as much politeness as if I were driving away in my carriage, and kept reiterating their farewells that they might not hear me thanking them. The wagon stood at the door, tilted overhead, and furnished pleasantly with straw, and when they lifted me in, and I stretched out my hands to grasp theirs at parting, my eyes were filled with tears.

Lying there, listening dreamily to the dull jingle of the bells upon the harness, and to the murmuring conversation carried on by Mr. Vaughan and the wagoner, I gradually dropped off again into a deep sleep, and never woke till they roused me, saying that the vehicle went no farther, and I must now alight.

It was almost dark. Looking round, I saw that we had stopped at the corner of a large square, with a low, pillared building pierced by arcades, all brightly lighted in the centre. More wagons, market carts, and barrows, were standing all about, and in some places I saw piles of wicker-baskets and heaps of leaves and straw.

"This," said my companion, "is Covent-garden market. I live in yonder street branching off at the farther corner. Lean upon me—we have not two hundred yards to go."

And so, very slowly and carefully, he supported me across the market-place, and down the gloomy turning. At a small old-fashioned house, with a sort of carved pent-house surmounted by a mask, overhanging the door, he paused and rang twice. The second peal had scarcely begun when it opened. All was pitch-dark within.

"Is that my little Alice?" said Mr. Vaughan, passing in before me. A hearty kiss was the reply. "Now come in, Natalie. Here is a strange lady come to keep my little girl company! Take her by the hand, darling, and lead her to the parlour."

At these words he put a tiny hand in mine—a shy, unwilling little hand, shrinking back till scarcely the fingertips remained—and by it I was guided into a gloomy room with a handful of red fire in the grate, too feeble to enable me even to discern the form of my conductress.

"How, my little Alice!" said Mr. Vaughan, "no candle! hardly any fire! Were you not afraid to sit here alone in the dark?"

"I had Sambo with me, papa," replied a childish voice. "I am never afraid when Sambo is here; am I, Sambo dear?"

A loud purr of satisfaction, and the entrance of Mr. Vaughan with candles, showed Sambo to be a gigantic black cat, and mitigated the surprise with which I had at first heard his name mentioned. He was standing with his tail very much erect, looking earnestly at me, and beside him knelt a little girl, who at once occupied all my attention—a timid, slender, blue-eyed, fairy thing, with her long light hair gathered behind her head in quaint womanly fashion, and her little arms clasped round the cat's neck, half in love, and half in shyness of the stranger.

"Dear little Alice," I said, going over and stooping down beside her, "will you kiss me?"

She drew back and shook her fair head. "I don't know you," said she, with large startled eyes.

"Perhaps not directly," I replied; "but I know you and love you already. Do give me one kiss, darling."

She hesitated, then put up her pretty cheek, and the moment it was done, ran and hid her face upon her father's arm.

"You must forgive my Alice, Natalie, if she be shy at first," said Mr. Vaughan, drawing the little head towards him, and passing his hand fondly over it. "She sees no one but me—no one but me!"

And he sighed heavily. Presently he said, "Alice, get us some supper, darling."

And Alice did get the supper, still looking very timid when her eyes met mine. Such a "neat-handed" little Phillis was never seen! Only to sit there and watch her spread the cloth, smoothing it with her hands the while; then fetch the plates, the knives, the bread, the cheese, the cruet-stand, was a sight to be remembered. These things were all stored in a huge carved oaken bureau at the farther end of the room, whence she brought them one by one and ranged them in their proper places. And ever as she went backwards and forwards, the black cat ran beside her with his tail rigorously perpendicular, and rubbed his head against her ankles at every opportunity.

When all was done, and her father had taken his seat at the table, she brought out a large cup full of bread and milk, drew a little stool beside the fire, and, sitting there very demurely, shared her supper with Sambo.

I could not keep from looking at her. The firelight flickered on her bright hair, and the cat (with his fore-paws resting on her knees) watched the spoon as it travelled backwards and forwards between the cup and her little rosy mouth. Now and then he would utter a plaintive remonstrance, and this never failed to bring him a morsel. Sometimes he would put up one paw and try to arrest the hand that held the spoon, which act of indecorous greediness was sure to be reproved by a shake of the wise little head, and a whispered exclamation of—

"Naughty Sambo! For shame, dear!"

It was such a fair sweet face! so delicately featured—so innocent, and withal so serious and so thoughtful! None of the vivacity, the buoyancy of others of her age—

none of the careless mirth. I had never seen anything so grave and so childish before.

When the supper was over, Mr. Vaughan whispered something very softly in her ear, something which filled her face with an uneasy wonder, and caused her to look round at me twice or thrice; but to which, nevertheless, she listened in silence and without reply. Then he lit a small lamp, placed the candle in her hand, kissed her several times over, and, bidding me "good night," desired her to precede me up the stairs. As we left the room I saw him take pens and music-paper from the table-drawer, place the lamp beside his elbow, and sit down to write.

It was a small bedchamber into which I followed her—a dreary, cold room, carpetless and curtainless, and very barely furnished. A pair of old-fashioned pistols at the bed's head, and some articles of male attire scattered here and there, showed me that this was Mr. Vaughan's own chamber. I said so instantly, but the child made no answer.

"Tell me, little Alice," I repeated. "Is not this papa's bedroom?"

"I must not say," she replied, firmly.

"And why not, dear?"

"Because papa said you would be vexed if you knew it."

I could not repress a smile.

"Well, little Alice," I said, "you see I do know it, and you have not told me either. A fairy came and whispered it in my ear."

"A fairy!" said the child, quickly. "What's that?"

"How, Alice! Don't you know what a fairy is?"

"I never heard of one before."

"Nor ever heard a fairy story?"

"Never."

I felt my heart ache, looking down so upon the earnest face upturned to mine, and thinking of all the childish pleasures it had lost. Poor little lonely darling! I bent down and kissed her, that she might not see what dimmed my eyes, and said cheerily—

"Well, all the better for little Alice, since she has it

still to come! I will tell you fairy-tales to-morrow, dear—and now, good night.”

“Good night,” she said; and then, pointing to a door at the opposite side of the room, added—“I sleep there.”

I followed her in. It was a tiny dressing-room warmly carpeted, and contained a little bed hung round with pretty curtains white and pink. Just facing the foot, hung the portrait of a lady painted in oils. It was a pale, gentle face, and seemed almost to smile upon us with its mild eyes.

“That’s my mamma,” said the child, seeing me pause before it.

“Do you remember her, darling?”

She shook her head.

“My mamma went to heaven a long time ago,” she said; “when I was a very little baby.”

Seeing the interest in my face, she gained confidence, and, drawing closer to me, continued—

“I like to have her there when I’m asleep—above all when papa’s away on Sunday nights. Sometimes,” and here her voice sank to a whisper—“sometimes I feel a little frightened—only a very little, you know—when I am alone down-stairs; but up here I never am afraid, because I know that she is looking at me. But you won’t tell papa that I am frightened, will you, please?”

I promised; then once more bade her good night, and returned to my own room. I was not tired now, for I had slept much all the day, and the thought of this motherless child pressed on my heart, and brought remembrances of my own infancy. Sitting there by the table, with my head resting on my hand, it came back to me with the first vividness—the old Water-Gate—the dusty attic where lay the chariot and the antique furniture—the little closet where I slept and listened to the river—the church, and the organ, and the funeral biers—the fête of St. Nicholas—the chalet

I turned to the carving which I had brought up in my hand—which had never left me since I recovered it the night before—and wetted it with tears.

Just then I heard a childish voice repeating, half-aloud, a childish prayer. Presently all was hushed, and soon afterwards I knew by her soft and steady breathing that she slept.

Creeping stealthily in, I stayed a long time by the bedside, looking at her. Of what was she dreaming now, and whence that placid smiling of her mouth? Sleep well, little Alice!

"Haply it is angels' duty,
During slumber, shade by shade,
To fine down this childish beauty
To the thing it must be made,
Ere the world shall bring it praises, or the tomb shall see it fade!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE POETRY OF SOUND.

It is a quaint old house. Being so weary, I had scarcely noticed it the night before. Now the case is different. Mr. Vaughan is out—has been out, says the child, for an hour before I woke—and I am at liberty to amuse myself in the parlour below.

It is a dusky, wainscotted room, with a deep cornice running round the ceiling, and a heavy carved chimney-piece of dark oak. Not far from the fireplace stands a small organ, half withdrawn into a recess. The keys are yellow with age and worn into deep hollows, and I can scarcely see the gilding on the pipes, for the dust lying over them. The lid is inscribed with a date of sixty years before. At the opposite side of the room, facing the organ, I observe an old-fashioned harpsichord—a frail, querulous instrument, laden heavily with books, and piles of dusty music-paper. It is built of some light wood inlaid with ebony, and along the front panel, in the midst of an ingenious device representing a lute, a flageolet, and a wreath of convolvuli and dog-roses, are the words:

"Ruckers Fecit Antwerpen!" Quite at the other end, beside the door, is a valuable oaken bureau, elaborately carved, and surmounted by a plaster bust of Mozart. Between these three principal objects the walls are furnished with book-shelves and pictures; and in one corner of the room, a huge bass-viol lies awkwardly back, like a sleepy giant. Over the chimney-piece hangs a collection of violins and pipes. Here are tiny "kits," and violins of unusual shapes or curious ornamentation; and, suspended beneath and between them, all sorts of fantastic meerschauums, pipes with gay bowls of coloured china, pipes with metal lids and tarnished tassels of silk and silver, pipes of the red Polish clay, and pipes with dragons' heads, death's heads, Turks' heads, and other strange contrivances.

The pictures hanging about next engage my attention. Like everything else in the room, they are old and dusty, and speak of a past age. Here is a portrait of the Padre Martini, and here a full-length engraving of Gluck, with a background showing Orpheus and Eurydice and the mouth of hell. Carefully framed and glazed, just above the harpsichord, hangs a curious old print of the Lincoln's-Inn Theatre of 1695, and a little farther on, Hogarth's "Laughing Audience."

Glancing next along the book-shelves, I see a Dictionary of Musicians in many volumes, and a History of Music that looks as if it might have been published two hundred years ago; Albrechtsberger on Counterpoint; the works of Lord Bacon; a voluminous edition of Shakspeare; a collection of the British Dramatists, which forms a little library in itself; the Spectator, Tatler, and Guardian; Johnson's Lives of the Poets, and the novels of Fielding, Goldsmith, and Smollet.

Finding none of these very attractive, and impelled, moreover, by an anxious desire not to intrude longer than I can help upon Mr. Vaughan's generous hospitality, I take pen and paper, and write to Madame de Wald.

The task is difficult—more difficult than I had imagined. After making many commencements, I at length succeed in writing something which is more a narrative than a

letter—which relates incident without trenching upon the forbidden ground of feeling—which is neither sad nor merry, and which, while it spares my own pride, puts no slight of indifference upon hers.

Even this letter is not what I meant it should be—yet it must go. I meant to have expressed more reconciliation to her will; more of the earnest love I bear unto herself; more of the old childlike feeling which accepted her wisdom upon faith, and, while submitting, strove, for her sake, to smile the suffering down. I meant—Alas! to what end dwell we upon “meant?” The shades and airy touches of feeling have no counterparts in words. Words trick and juggle with us, forswear themselves, and, like unequal mirrors, distort the fair appearances reflected in them. Thus hearts go unexpressed into the grave, and the language which should interpret them, and which they dumbly strive to utter forth, is yet a tongue unknown. Haply the angels speak it.

Having finished writing, I look up and see little Alice sitting in a corner peeling apples. The child has been for some time in the room, but, till now, I was so much absorbed as not even to have remarked her occupation. She does it very expeditiously, very noiselessly, very dexterously—like an experienced housekeeper—and though Sambo, gambolling about her in a dignified and somewhat condescending manner, is endeavouring to engage her attention, she has not spoken or stirred since her entrance.

“Why so silent, little Alice?”

She looked up hastily, and the faintest reflection of a blush crossed her pale brow.

“You were writing, Mademoiselle.”

“Mademoiselle!” I repeated. “Who taught you to call me by that name?”

“My papa told me while he was at breakfast.”

“By the bye, Alice dear,” I said, going over and kneeling down beside her—“I have something to say to you, and that is, that I cannot, will not, again deprive papa of his bed-room; and I want you to contrive with me that

I may make up some sort of a bed somewhere else. Now tell me, is there anywhere an empty room?"

The child's face brightened, and she looked gratefully at me.

"Oh, yes," she said; "there are three that we never use up-stairs. You can have the one over mine. There is a bedstead in it. Janet slept there."

"And who was Janet?"

"My nurse, who went away two years ago."

"Your nurse, Alice! Were you sorry, dear, when she was gone?"

"I was very sorry," replied the child, "but papa said she must go. Papa was very sorry, too," she added with a sigh.

"Then why——" I began, but checked myself half way.

"Because we are poor," said little Alice, answering the unfinished question. "We were not always so poor either—at least so Janet told me, and she knew my mamma."

"But you have not been alone, all alone, in this house ever since she left, Alice?"

"Yes, I have, Mademoiselle," replied the child, simply.

"But who gets papa's breakfast—who cooks the dinner—who——"

"I get papa's breakfast," said she, smiling, "and I cook the dinner, too. Oh, I can do it very well," she added, seeing me about to speak. "I did not do it quite so well at first, but I soon learnt."

"Alas, little Alice!" I exclaimed, smoothing her silken hair with both my hands. Seeing the pity in my face, she smiled again. Such an old smile as it was, too!

"I like it very much, Mademoiselle," she said. "I should not know what to do all day if I had no amusement. Besides, I like to be able to do something for dear papa—don't I, Sambo?"

And she bent down in her childish way and kissed old Sambo, now lying curled up at her feet.

"Well, darling, you must let me do something for papa also, while I am here," I said, "for I have nothing now to

occupy me, without I help you a little. What are you going to do with those apples?"

"They are for the pudding to-day, Mademoiselle."

"Well, Alice," I said, bravely, though with an inward sinking at the heart which I would not acknowledge even to myself—"let me make the pudding."

The child glanced up at me somewhat doubtfully.

"Do you make puddings for your papa, when you are at home?" she asked.

"I never made one, dear," I said. "—— and I have no papa."

Something in my countenance or tone of voice touched her. She laid down her dish of apples, and put her arms timidly about my neck.

"Poor Mademoiselle!" she whispered, nestling closely to me. And then we were both silent.

That day we divided the household duties. Alice made the pudding, and otherwise prepared the dinner in a damp dungeon down below which she called a kitchen; while I busied myself by preparing a bed in Janet's chamber. At five o'clock Mr. Vaughan came home. He spoke kindly to me, and shook hands when he entered; but fell after that into a train of deep thought which lasted throughout dinner-time, and had a wan and careworn look upon his face that I had scarcely noticed yesterday. The child, however, seemed accustomed to his mood. She brought the dishes noiselessly in and out; watched him eagerly, and supplied his plate with all he needed before he could ask for it; and, passing once behind his back, laid her finger meaningly upon her lip, enjoining me to silence.

When the meal was over, he filled the great meerschaum, and smoked for a long time without once opening his lips. Then he sighed heavily, and, turning his chair, looked round at little Alice and me, as we were sitting working in the window at the other end of the room.

"Natalie," he said, quickly, "what are you doing with my coat?"

"Mending it, sir," I replied, feeling my face flush over as I said it.

A grim smile dawned upon his countenance.

"Come, come, child," he said, more gently, "that's an ungrateful task. Lay it aside. I want you to talk to me now."

I laid it aside as he bade me, and took a chair facing his own. Little Alice crouched down upon a stool between us, and laid her head upon her father's knee.

"Tell me something about yourself, Natalie," he continued. "Are you better? What have you been doing? How do you get on with Alice here?"

"I am quite well to-day," I replied, answering his questions in their order, "and I have been writing to Madame de Wald, and preparing my bedroom. As for Alice, I love her dearly, and I think she loves me a little. How say you, darling?"

The child kissed me fondly in reply, and then went back to her old place again.

"You were right, Natalie," he said, musingly, "to let your friends in Switzerland know where you are—yet we shall both be sorry when Mademoiselle is gone away, eh Alice? What do you mean by preparing your bedroom?"

"I mean that I will occupy yours no longer, sir," I replied. "It was with deep regret that I did so last night."

"Alice! Alice!" said Mr. Vaughan, holding up his finger, reprovingly, "I bade you keep that secret!"

"And she did keep it," I answered. "I made the discovery for myself; and now I have a very comfortable chamber of my own, which I greatly prefer."

Mr. Vaughan uttered a sort of growl, and smoked on. By and bye he looked up again, and said—

"Natalie, do you know anything of music?"

"I have been taught to play on the pianoforte," I replied.

"Taught to play on the pianoforte!" echoed he, discontentedly. "That's what they're all taught now-a-days; just as our mothers were taught to work samplers and make gooseberry wine! And they have about as much soul for the one as the other—only that we *could* drink their wine; but—well, well! What can you play?"

"If you have anything here by Thalberg or Liszt . . ."
I began.

"Bah! I thought as much! Thalberg and Liszt!—Froth and fireworks! Froth and fireworks! O Music! Music! when thou wert an angel, and Saint Cecilia very kindly drew thee down, she little meant that we should clip thy wings, dress thee in furbelows and flounces, and turn thee into a fashionable lady! But if she could have guessed it, she'd have shown her wisdom by just leaving you where she found you! Thalberg and Liszt! Pshaw! Sit down, child, and play this."

It was a little pastoral movement from Corelli's eighth Concerto, and looked easy enough; but I felt very nervous, and when I began my fingers trembled. The movement, too, was by no means what I expected. I had not played eight bars of it when I found myself in a labyrinth of tied notes and moving inner-parts, such as I had never met with in the music to which I was accustomed, and the intricacies of which I found it almost impossible to follow. Still, with a sort of desperate courage, I kept on, and though constantly guilty of letting notes go which should have been held down, and of holding down notes which should have been let go, I struggled somehow through the piece, and got to the end at last.

Mr. Vaughan growled again when I had done, and desired me to play it once more through. I did so, and this time, by force of a stern determination, without a single false note.

"Ha!" said he, laying his pipe aside, and coming over beside me. "Ha! I see you can conquer difficulties if you like! That's something—but it's not all, Natalie—it's not all! I dare say now you think you have played that very well; but it's a dead body, child!—a soulless corpse—an artificial rose, all pink muslin and green paper—a map of Arcadia, with bits of shading for the mountains, and running lines where there should be running waters. Let's hear them gurgling along under the willows, Natalie! Give the blowing freshness to your scentless

rose! Bid your dead man rise and walk, and utter poetry! Do you understand me?"

"I think so. My playing wants expression."

"—And, wanting expression, wants the grace of life. Now mark," continued Mr. Vaughan, speaking more rapidly, and directing my attention with his finger, bar by bar, along the music as he spoke—"Mark! this thing is pastoral—is piped by shepherds watching their flocks in the hot noonday. The character of the composition is smooth and lulling, like the dreamy life around them. It lapses in with the ripple of the fountain and the singing of the thrushes. As it commences in thirds (the simplest duet-form), we will suppose it played by two boys lying in some green nook of shadow. It rises and falls with the coming and going of the wind among the leaves. It is taken up by another pipe far away. The river near at hand seems murmuring a quiet bass. Then one player is silent—then another, and one only, borne away by the stream of his own melody, sends the fairy music floating down into the golden sunshine of the valley. Presently a bird, up among the branches overhead, begins to warble. The other players take it up again, and the western breeze, wandering down a solitary pass, sighs mournfully by, like a voice of warning. Then all is hushed, the day is darkened, and for one brief moment it seems as if Nature held her breath. And *then*—the cloud passes; the sun comes out; the river glides; the trees bow like plumed knights; birds and shepherds begin again in full and flowing harmony; and so the piece progresses to its close. Now, Natalie, till you can read me that poem in the notes before you, you cannot play them as they should be played. There was nought of 'oaten stop or pastoral song' in the steady, level mechanism of your touch; yet, to render this tiny movement truthfully, it should be clear as crystal, liquid as water, smooth as oil. There is metre and rhyme in music, as in poetry; colour, as in painting; and every pulse of tenderness and passion, as in the sonnets of Petrarch or the tragedies of Shakspeare. Learn to look for these; learn to distinguish them—learn to

express them. Know the Epic from the Idyll, the Ballad from the Ode, and give to each its due interpretation. But tell me—do you love music?"

"As you describe it—yes."

"And have you never heard such?"

"Yes, when I was a child, and used to go and listen to the organ in the Church of St. Nicholas."

"Ah," said he, quickly, "I have heard of that instrument. And you enjoyed it then, eh? But surely you liked it as well up to the last? You did not get wearied of it?"

"I seldom went there after I lived with Madame de Wald," I replied. "I believe I was fonder of music when utterly untaught than I have ever been since."

"Thanks to Thalberg and Liszt!" exclaimed Mr. Vaughan with a grimace. "Out upon the sickly sentimentalism and shallow blustering of this modern school! Out upon their spasmodic Fantasias and Capriccios, and upon all the tribe of Reveries, Rhapsodies, Pensées, Nocturnes, and Morceaux! What, in the name of sense, do they all mean? Is the world going to sleep, that our music should be writ after this lullaby fashion? What has become of the spirit that inspired our old English school? Where is the refined animation of Arne, and the masculine vigour of Purcell? Where the fibre, bone, and muscle of Green and Tallis? Alas for English music and English taste!"

Here Mr. Vaughan resumed his meerschaum, and began to smoke. Presently he again took up the subject.

"And where there is fine music to be found, they will not seek it! Germany, Germany now presses to the van, and owns the best names of the century. Nowhere is music so earnestly cultivated—nowhere is literature promising so golden a harvest—nowhere is moral philosophy so studied and taught. Germany is the centre of modern intellectual development—she encourages knowledge and labour, and the works of her sons are a perpetual tribute to Time and Thought. So with music; so with literature; so with science. And what is the result? What

is the effect upon the age of such minds as those of Spohr and Mendelssohn? What are the fruits of emulation ensuing from the revelations opened upon us by Beethoven's daring and spiritual style, and by the romantic colouring of Weber? Why, the result, the great and glorious result is this weed-crop of noisy Fantasia and unmeaning Nocturne—this substitution of manual dexterity for poetry and truth—this diet of syllabubs and soda-water! And then what sheer madness it is, this *godt* for flourish and steam-power! what a practical caricature upon taste and science! Can it be any source of rational pleasure to me if a pianist does with his two hands what could better be done by four? What end is answered if he execute a mass of difficulties which it has cost months of his life to overcome, and which is intolerably ugly and unsatisfactory when done? If mechanism such as this is to become the test and standard of excellence, a dancing master, forsooth! may claim Academic honours, and an Indian juggler take precedence of Herschel and Goethe!"

He was talking not to me, but himself. I doubt indeed if, while giving utterance to this curious train of mingled sarcasm, enthusiasm, and invective, he even remembered my presence in the room.

It had now grown quite dusk. The lamps were lighted in the street, and the sounds of traffic had become gradually more and more infrequent.

He remained for a long time profoundly silent. Then he rose suddenly, and going over to the organ, played divinely for some hours, sometimes suffering his fingers to wander at will along the keys—sometimes pausing, as if in thought—sometimes improvising a solemn chant or a devotional voluntary; and sometimes breaking forth into a lofty and impassioned movement, like the inspired thanksgiving of a triumphant host.

And this—this I felt was indeed music—music far heavenlier than even that which I had so worshipped when a child—music worthy to be styled the Poetry of Sound!

CHAPTER XXI.

A VALUABLE DISCOVERY.

I NEVER received any reply from Madame de Wald.

When three weeks had gone by I wrote again, and then once more, and still the same dead silence. She had abandoned me—cast me off utterly—sent me forth into the world to beg my bread or starve as fate might decree! would not even replace the letter I had lost! would not even extend to me the shelter of that roof which at first she had promised to me! Could I have said, or done, or written some unpardonable thing since we had parted? Could it be that I deserved this bitter chastisement? Was it all over, and should I never see or hear of her more?

It was a long time before I could bring myself even to contemplate the possibility of this thing, much less believe that it had actually come to pass. It seemed impossible that she should spurn me when I loved, prayed for, revered her so!

Yet I was forced to receive it for cruel truth at last.

I have never told the shame and anguish it was to me, or the restless weary nights I spent, when my brain was racked with thinking of it, and it seemed so long till day. No one beheld the tears it wrung from me, or guessed the utter, hopeless, resistless desolation of spirit that fell upon me. Denied her esteem, I seemed almost to have forfeited my own, and grew reckless of the future.

Madame despised me! Madame had cast me off!

These thoughts were hell. Repeating them to myself with a sort of savage self-inflicting bitterness, as I often did when alone, I used to writhe under them like a prisoner under the torture.

Had my love for her been less of a religion—had I not set her apart from all the world beside and worshipped her as my life's divinity—had I even owed less to her bounty, and never tasted of the joy and pride consequent

upon a friendship such as hers, it would, perhaps, have been easier to bear. But she had been all to me, all! Mother, benefactress, friend!

I doubted myself next. Having erred at first through pure timidity and thoughtlessness, I came now to look upon myself as a monster of ingratitude, and upon my childish love-dream as a hideous presumption. I strove to banish the recollection of it from my mind; shunned every thought of Louis, as if to remember him were a sin; and, taking from my finger the ring he had given to me, sealed it up in a little pasteboard box, and hid it out of my own sight, deeming even that sacrifice the fulfilment of a sacred duty.

Oh the mazy paths of conjecture trodden and re-trodden till the heart ached and the throbbing brain grew dull and wearied! Oh the self-reproach, and the doubt, and the watching, that made eyes once called bright by lips beloved, grow dim and heavy,—that stole away the rounded graces of youth, and touched with a pallor of later years the girlish cheek of eighteen!

I may here observe that every inquiry was instituted respecting my property; but Mrs. Jones was neither to be found or heard of, and I was thrown entirely upon the hospitality of Mr. Vaughan. He was all that kindness could suggest, and did everything in his power to render my position less distressing. He called me his second daughter—protested frequently that, but for the anxiety it occasioned to myself, he blessed the accident which made his house my home; and, with a subtle delicacy which I could not have anticipated in a character so abrupt and so abstracted, permitted me even to fancy myself useful to him, by setting me to sort, repair, and catalogue his vast piles of loose music; by employing me to transcribe his manuscript compositions; and by suffering me to devote some hours in every day to the education of little Alice.

Thus I taught her German and drawing, and carried on the usual routine of writing and reading; and sometimes Mr. Vaughan gave me a music-lesson in the evening, and accompanied me on the violin. In this manner we went

through the piano and violin compositions of Mozart, Weber, Beethoven, and others, and at last a time came when my master would praise and encourage me, and, patting me gently on the head, say, with a sly smile, "Well, well, Natalie, that's very nicely played—but how about your old favourites, Thalberg and Liszt?"

Now it happened one day that after we had been trying several things in succession, we came upon a little MS. song bearing his initials in one corner, and a date of many years before. He snatched it up hastily, and as he glanced over it I saw his colour change.

"Oh time! time! time!" he muttered to himself. "I never thought to see this little thing again!"

And he laid it down, looking mournfully upon it the while.

"I wrote it for my wife," he continued, musingly, "and she used to sing it to little Alice in her cradle. I should like to hear it once again. Natalie, can you sing it?"

"I cannot sing," I replied.

"And why not? Surely you have some voice? Everyone has."

"I don't know if I have or not. I never tried."

"Try now, then," said Mr. Vaughan, taking my place at the harpsichord, and playing some simple chords of accompaniment. "There, courage! you have but to take breath and open your mouth, and the thing is as easy as talking. Bravo! Now a note higher. Pshaw! you can do it if you have only courage! Come, one more!"

"Indeed, sir," I said, "I can't sing any higher."

"But I say you shall. Confound it, child! why don't you go on?"

Too much alarmed by his impetuosity to resist, and expecting every instant to hear my voice crack, I obeyed him.

"Higher!" he cried; "higher! If I shake the notes out of you, you *shall* go higher still! There! there! there! Hurrah! shake hands, child!"

"How—why! what is the matter?" I exclaimed,

thinking that Mr. Vaughan must be taking leave of his wits ; for I had never seen him so cast aside his usual apathy before.

"Why, Natalie, it's an estate to you! a treasure! a gold-mine, I tell you!"

"What is a gold-mine?"

"Your voice! of course, your voice! Don't you hear it yourself, you little idiot! It's superb! It's a voice that can be made to do anything—that shall be made to do everything! Why you're another Storace! Take your first lesson this instant—practise three hours a day—put your whole heart, and all that brave resolute nature of yours into it, and be a credit to your teacher!"

"And do you really tell me that I shall be able to earn a living by my voice, sir?"

"A living! You'll be the first soprano of the day."

"Thank God!" I exclaimed, clasping my hands; and I am sure that I never spoke those words more devoutly in my life. To be independent, to have it in my power to assist those who had assisted me, to own some one aim, some one career, some object to engage my restless mind and rouse my dormant ambition—was not this indeed something to be grateful for? I could hardly believe it at first. It seemed too good to be true.

That evening I took my first singing lesson, and every subsequent evening, after Mr. Vaughan had had his tea and his meerschaum, it was repeated.

Day by day my voice increased in flexibility and power. At first I found it almost unmanageable, harsh and wavering in the lower notes; weak and husky in the upper. Gradually these defects yielded to my perseverance. I tamed down its stubbornnesses till I could command it like an instrument; studied every gradation of tone till no inequalities remained; and toiled with patient assiduity to extend its register. My success amazed myself. It was not very long before I could read off any melody at sight; and it soon became evident both to my master and myself that I should chiefly excel in feats of execution and in the expression of high-wrought emotion.

I remember how I one day astonished Mr. Vaughan by repeating, in my best bravura style, some brilliant and difficult variations that he had been improvising but a moment before upon the violin. After that he often made such exercises a part of my daily lesson, and there was nothing which we both enjoyed more than these trials of skill.

And so the autumn waned, and the winter-time came on ; and as the weeks and months wore by, I learned from sure experience that grief's unfailing antidote is—Labour.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SKELETON IN THE HOUSE.

I HAD been for some weeks the guest of Mr. Vaughan before I knew what it was that occupied him every night for long hours after Alice and I were gone to bed. Not, in fact, till he gave me some of the band-parts to copy did I even guess that he was engaged upon the composition of an opera—an opera seria—a grand work which was to embody the spirit of his peculiar views, rescue his genius from obscurity, and win both fortune and position for his little Alice.

The subject of his libretto was that well-known Rhine-legend of the brothers who both loved one gentle lady. The poem and plot had been tolerably treated. The music was admirable.

By and bye, when we had all grown more intimate, he would play over to me in the morning all that he had composed the night before, sometimes trying it on the piano, sometimes on the violin, and often going from the one to the other, as he thought either instrument better adapted to the character of any particular passage.

"It must succeed," he would say, turning to me with a faint flush upon his sallow cheek and a sort of strange, stern enthusiasm in his voice. "It must succeed!—there

is life in it—my life, Natalie! All is new, and solid, and true. Not a note of it but comes from my very heart. Not an idea that has not been bought by the severest brain-work. Can frivolity, and mannerism, and conventional prejudice overbear a thing like this? I'll not believe it! When the weak wave drives upon the rock it must break! God knows how devoutly I have vowed myself to this task! how I have never taken up the pen to it without humbly and earnestly seeking to utter forth worthily those thoughts which are His inspiration, or without putting up a prayer for the motherless child whose dowry I fain would make it. No, no, Natalie! Surely—surely a work freighted thus with all the poetry of a man's soul—all the gathered wisdom, all the ambitions, all the holiest affections of a life, cannot be destined to be wrecked at last!"

It seemed so to me also, watching its daily progress and seeing the wealth of beauty lavished on it.

And now one thing became painfully apparent to me. Ever since I had been there I had feared it, and as often as I had feared I had put it from me, persuading myself that it was but a baseless conjecture. The time came at last when I could shut my eyes to it no longer. This thing was poverty—hideous, creeping poverty, coming nearer, nearer, nearer, every day.

It would not be possible for me now to recall those first gradations and signs by which I discovered that Mr. Vaughan's means were growing more and more straitened, though soon from "trifles light as air" they passed to sterner proofs.

Oh it was hard indeed to sit idly by and partake of the bread which he could so ill afford to give! To note his careworn face, and the feverish anxiety with which he laboured. How often have I seen him pause and call the child to his side, as if to gather new courage from her innocent caresses, and then write on again for hours, till forced at last from sheer exhaustion to give over. How often when he had been out during the day, I have known him toil through the long night, and heard his slow step

going up the stairs as morning dawned. How much oftener still have I observed him lost in listless melancholy, with his chin dropped on his breast and the pen lying idly in his hand, staring down at the unwritten page and then rousing himself with a sigh.

It was a bitter winter. Snow fell early in December, and throughout the month of January an iron-bound frost reigned unremittingly. The child's clothing was scanty and unseasonable, like my own, and we felt the cold severely. Our stock of coals, too, kept diminishing, without prospect of renewal, and Alice agreed with me in the necessity of sparing them as much as possible. To this end we only lighted the fire when we cooked.

It was on the seventh or eighth of January that we came to this decision. Mr. Vaughan had gone out to give a singing lesson, (alas! he had now but that one pupil!) and I dreaded the moment of his return, when he should enter the desolate room—I dreaded the breaking of that tacit reserve which had hitherto subsisted between us upon the one dark subject—I dreaded the sight of his sorrow at this open confession of our need. When his knock came to the door I trembled, and the child's eyes met mine.

"What will papa say?" she whispered.

I could only shake my head in silence.

He came in. I never lifted my eyes from the music that I was transcribing. I could hear my own heart beating.

"What!" said he, "no fire! How could you let it out this cold night?"

No one answered.

"How could you forget the fire?" he repeated.

"It was not forgotten," I replied, with a faltering effort at cheerfulness. "We—we are not very cold, and, besides, we must spare the coals for cooking."

Mr. Vaughan sat down, lit his little lamp, and began his evening labour in silence. But, when we went to bed, he drew the child towards him, and held her a long time closely against his breast.

"Good night, my little dove, good night! May He who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb preserve and bless thee! Well, well! there is but one Act to write now—only one Act, and then—then, my darling So! go to bed, love—go to bed, and sleep warmly. Good night, Natalie."

My travelling cloak made a comfortable cloth dress for little Alice, and a warm cape for myself; and with part of the sables I put a collar and pair of cuffs to Mr. Vaughan's coat.

He was not well that evening and went to bed early, and I sent Alice to his room, when he had dropped asleep, to steal the coat away.

It was my turn this time to sit up, and when I went to bed it was grey morning.

I could hear my master sleeping profoundly. His door was ajar, left so for the purpose by Alice, that I might lay the coat inside as I passed by. I opened it by slow degrees wider and wider, a hair's breadth at a time, and laid the garment on the nearest chair. Creeping away again, as I had entered, covering the candle with my hand, I glanced towards the bed, and saw two heads there—one massive, and rough, and masculine as that of the Farnese Hercules, shaded by a mass of careless hair, and resting on an upturned arm that looked as though it might have slain the Lion and wielded the Brazen Club; the other golden, and child-like, and pillowed lovingly upon the stronger shoulder.

It was little Alice who had left her own tiny chamber, and come nestling to her father's desolate heart.

Mr. Vaughan had been working incessantly for a week. I do not believe that he had any night taken more than four hours' rest. This last evening he seemed greatly excited, and wrote fast, humming the melody sometimes

to himself as he went on, and sometimes going over to the harpsichord and trying the effect of certain harmonies.

By and bye he laid the pen aside and pushed back his chair.

"Natalie," said he, abruptly, "what is the day of the month?"

"I think," I replied, "that it is the fifth of February."

"The fifth of February!" he repeated, and added the date beneath the last bar which he had been writing. "The fifth of February! Well, then, on the fifth of February I have finished my opera!"

"Finished it!" I exclaimed.

"Finished it, dear papa!" echoed the child joyfully.

Mr. Vaughan snatched her up in his arms and kissed her again and again.

"Yes, darling, yes!" he cried passionately. "It is over at last, and may God's blessing prosper it and thee! He knows what thought has been most present with me while I wrote it. He knows why fortune would be acceptable to me, and why I pray for fame. He knows the unwritten dedication sanctifying every page of it from first to last! There it lies, complete—complete after so many months of eager toil."

He turned over the leaves of the great manuscript lovingly, almost reverently, then walked to and fro for some minutes.

"I will take it up to-morrow to Drury Lane," he said. "They *must* buy it. That part of *Ildegonda* is the very thing for Malibran, and Templeton's scena in the duet-scene will almost bring the house down. Oh, it must go—it must go! I see nothing but success before me! But I won't sell it outright. No, no! I'll take a share of the profits and a small sum down. Then there'll be the provincial theatres—and I'll lead the orchestra the first night at Drury Lane, and, who knows? perhaps I may after that obtain some employment by conducting at the oratorios and musical festivals! Impossible even to guess what it may lead to. Ha, children! away with care, away with

work, and let's be merry! Come, what shall we do to amuse each other to-night?"

"Natalie shall tell a fairy story!" cried Alice, clapping her hands, "and I may sit up till eleven o'clock."

"And papa will play some merry tunes, and little Alice shall be dressed up and dance to them," I added.

"And the mistress of the house shall allow us a fire in the grate and toasted cheese for supper," said Mr. Vaughan, making a bow to the child. "And papa will go down to the cellar and fetch the last bottle of his old port, that has lain there these eighteen years, and we'll drink the health of the opera in port wine negus!"

And so the fire was lighted, and the wine brought up, and the cheese toasted, and the fairy-tale told; and papa knotted up a handkerchief on each hand, and performed a scene from the history of the immortal Punch; and little Alice was dressed like an Oriental maiden, with an old scarf tied loosely round her slender waist, and a red handkerchief folded about her head for a turban; and it would puzzle me to say which amongst us three was the greatest child that night!

Mr. Vaughan took the opera next day to Drury Lane Theatre, and, not having been admitted to the presence of the manager, left it with a letter at the stage-door. He had wished for a personal interview, and seemed somewhat disconcerted by the manner in which his request had been negatived by one of the underlings of the establishment.

"He tossed the manuscript on one side," said my master, uneasily, "and scarcely vouchsafed me a reply when I urged him to place it immediately before the manager. I fear it may lie there for several days before it is read. Well—no matter! He will read it at last, and my time is coming! my time is coming!"

Alas! several weeks went by, and still, to his repeated inquiries, the reply was—

"Your work is under consideration. Call again in about eight or ten days!"

And all this time we getting poorer and poorer.

A morning came at last when there was no money in the house.

Mr. Vaughan's pupil had paid him some arrears for lessons not very long ago, and yesterday we had expended our last shilling. My master did not know this, so we agreed together, Alice and I, that we would conceal it from him so long as concealment was yet possible. This stern necessity had been apparent to me for a considerable time. I was prepared for it, and knew that it would come at last. So I put my bonnet on, and went out silently.

The child wondered how it was that I came back with three gold pieces in my purse, but I turned aside her question with a jest, and kept my secret.

That day we had meat for dinner, and neither of them observed that I no longer wore my watch.

Food! food! food!

We must have it. Wanting it, we grow reckless of the future and forgetful of the past—the rarest treasures of Art are but dross to us—Science and Philosophy mere empty bubbles—Life a hideous lie—and Poetry a phantom that crumbles away into dust and ashes.

Food!

It is the life of the warmest heart, and the light of the mightiest intellect. It is the pulse of this swarming world. It is the spring that moves us, hand and brain, weak puppets that we are!

We must have it.

One by one I parted with the few trinkets I possessed, till the ring and the carving alone remained. I clung to these with despairing fondness. I could not let them go. I would die first.—Yet, to see the father and child, who had ministered to me in the hour of my extreme need,

want while I could give! How could I let him sacrifice his books, or his music, or the instruments which had been his solace for long years, and which were hallowed to him by remembrances of the loved and dead? Could I do this?

No—no—no—sooner part with . . . I could not part with them either! What should I do? What should I do?

Mr. Vaughan had gone to the theatre again. It was just possible that he might have some success! At all events I resolved to wait till evening.

The morning was wet, cold, and dreary. By this time it must have been (to the best of my recollection) about the third week in March. A heavy lassitude possessed me, and I sat beside the window looking out vacantly into the street, with my head resting on my hand. Hours went by thus.

In the midst of these doubts and waverings, a beggar-woman came under the window at which I was sitting and began to sing. I scarcely heard her at first, in my abstraction, but, catching by and bye some notes of a familiar air, I observed her with more attention. She looked up to me beseechingly. Her voice faltered, and she was very pale. I shook my head.

"Poor creature!" I said, musingly, "I have nothing to give but my pity, and perhaps I stand in more need of charity than thee!"

At that moment a gentleman passing by placed some halfpence in her extended hand. Then, with one long look at me, she moved slowly away, and I presently heard her chanting her little ballad in the distance.

Shelterless outcast as she was, she was richer now than I!

A dreadful, a humiliating thought flashed over me! I moaned aloud, and hid my face in my hands!

At four o'clock he came home. I knew at once by his

bent brows and haggard cheek that this journey, like the rest, had been fruitless. He sighed heavily.

"No answer, Natalie! no answer! Still I know it is the busy season, and he must have time to reflect on so considerable a work. It is better he should not decide hastily."

Hollow comfort! I looked down and made no reply. He had tried to speak cheerfully, and up to this moment I had spoken cheerfully too. But to-day I could not. My lips quivered, and I felt that if I strove to smile, the tears must come.

There was a long silence, and when my master again addressed me, it was in the bitter accents of despair.

"Oh, I am sick at heart, Natalie! sick at heart! What is to become of the child?"

That day we divided a stale crust and a few potatoes. No one spoke; but we stared hopelessly each upon the wan face of the other, and the phantom Hunger came and sat amongst us at the table!

Evening closed in. Mr. Vaughan had taken his hat and hurried away long since, to hide his wretchedness. When it grew dusk I went out.

"Where are you going, Mademoiselle?" asked little Alice, meeting me on the stairs, and looking up anxiously in my face.

"To market, my darling," I replied. "We have nothing in the house for papa's supper."

"But, Mademoiselle—I thought we had no money left!"

"Tush! no money, Alice! Well, well, you'll see if I don't bring something nice home with me. Good-bye, darling!"

And so I kissed the little puzzled face and hastened away.

The streets were dark and wet. The wind had changed since morning, and the air was warm and heavy. My shoes were worn, and the liquid mud soaked through them at every step. I felt so weak and so heart-broken that I

longed to die; and passing a man with a new coffin strapped upon his shoulders, I wished that it were mine, and that all this weary, weary weight of life were taken from me.

Close to my heart, under the cape which served me for a cloak, I carried something hidden, and with it made my way to a curiosity-dealer's in a narrow court opening off the Strand. When I came to his window I hesitated. All was very quiet, and the muffled sounds of traffic along the neighbouring thoroughfare only served to make it seem still quieter. There were other shops in the court, and most of them were closed, but inside this one a faint light was burning. Peering in timidly between the dim outlines of pictures and vases filling the dark window, I saw an old man writing busily within, with a small oil-lamp by his side. The counter was strewn with articles of antique jewellery, and the shelves behind him were laden with porcelain figures, grinning idols, busts, and other fantastic things. Suits of gleaming armour, pieces of heavy carved furniture, and such more ponderous goods filled the remainder of the shop. It was a strange picture—like a scene by Gerard Dow. Despite my misery, it fascinated me, and I could not choose but stand there, looking at it. Presently a heavy hand on my shoulder and a stern voice in my ear roused me—

"Come, move one way or another, if you please, young woman. It don't look well, staring this way into people's windows."

It was a policeman going his rounds. I started—hesitated—walked away slowly, and clutched more tightly at the hidden treasure under my cloak.

My little Joan of Arc, shall I or shall I not?

Turning swiftly and resolutely back, I regain the shop of the curiosity-dealer—my hand is on the door, and—it is useless! I cannot, will not do it!

There is yet another resource.

Retracing my steps, I arrive in the vicinity of Covent Garden Market, and turning down a quiet street where there are few lamps and the houses look tolerably large

and respectable, I place myself in a dark spot beneath a lighted window, and begin to sing. It is a little Italian song, simple and sweet both in words and melody. My voice trembles at first, but, seeing no one near, I gain courage as I go on, and finish it without interruption. When I have done, I wait for a moment, and then, seeing a shadow upon the blind above, begin a second of the same description. Before I have sung the whole of one verse, the door is opened. A servant beckons me up the steps, puts money in my hand, and a young lady, coming timidly behind her, says—

“My poor girl, are you a foreigner?”

Quick as thought I adopt the suggestion, and, shaking my head, say, with the best accent I can muster—

“Sono povera Italiana, signora.”

“Ah, she is Italian!” exclaims the young lady quickly. “I wish I knew Italian better, for I should like to hear her story. Stay, don’t let her go yet—here is something more.”

So, with a sweet pity in her face, she gives me a shilling from her purse, and, while I am yet thanking her, closes the door.

Now on a little farther, and into a silent square. Here I begin again, and sing the same song, getting a little bolder from my late success. By and bye an upper window is opened, and several pence, wrapt in paper, fall beside my feet; then some passing foot-passengers add to my little store, and a party of young men coming along arm-in-arm, stop to listen.

“The girl has a voice,” says one, giving me a small silver coin, and trying, saucily enough, to see my face.

“Who taught you to sing so well, my dear?” asks another.

Trembling from head to foot, but still with sufficient presence of mind to keep up the character I have assumed, I only bow my head, and, saying—“Grazie, Signori. Grazie molte”—turn away, and escape into the market. Here I venture to stand near a lighted window and count my gains, which amount to no less than two and tenpence.

Two and tenpence! we can exist for three days upon that, and sup to-night as well!

So I purchase the wherewithal for our frugal meal, and, going home with a lighter heart, have the table spread, and everything in readiness before Mr. Vaughan returns.

What a frightful alternative this, of Food or Death!

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE COLLEGE HORNPIPE.

I CANNOT now remember what first gave me the idea of becoming a chorus-singer. Whether it was from reading anything in a newspaper, or in one of Mr. Vaughan's dramatic books—or if it were caught from some stray mention of that class during Mr. Vaughan's own conversations with me respecting the opera, I know not. But, at all events, it did occur to me, as it were providentially, and I spoke to my master on the subject.

He objected vehemently, almost angrily, when I began to urge the point, alleging that so mean a commencement would injure my future prospects as a vocalist, and be apt to impart an undesirable breadth and coarseness to my style. However, I overruled these objections in time.

"Do you not see," said I, "that we are in want of money for our daily expenditure—nay, that we are all in want of clothes. Look at Alice! see how thinly she is clad, and how pale she grows for need of better nourishment. Indeed, sir, I had better do it. It will make me acquainted, too, with the style of the best singers. Every performance of Malibran's will be a lesson to me."

"That's true," said my master, relenting.

"And then," I continued, following up the advantage I had gained, "it is but for a little while. When your opera is accepted, and your influence at the theatre firmly established, you will but have to speak a word in my favour

and I shall be promoted to a better position—perhaps, even to the rank of second soprano!”

“That’s very true,” said Mr. Vaughan, with a beaming countenance. “That’s really very true. I didn’t see it in that light, Natalie. Ha! I’ll protect you, I’ll speak for you, I’ll introduce you—never fear! never fear!”

And so I carried my point, and went that day to wait upon the chorus-master of Drury Lane Theatre. We agreed that it would be as well if, under existing circumstances, Mr. Vaughan were not seen in this matter; so he accompanied me to the door, told me to ask for Mr. Gammidge, and then waited for me at the corner of the street.

Now Mr. Gammidge resided in the house, and over the shop of Mr. Hezekiah Ben-Ephraim, *costumier*. Seeing no private-door, I found myself obliged to go into the shop, where I found an inexpressibly hideous old Jewess surrounded by all sorts of strange things, gigantic masks, cases filled with wigs and beards of all lengths and colours, glittering stage-dresses, foils, battle-axes, halberts, feathers, armour, artificial flowers, great closed wardrobes, and piles of boxes and bandboxes without end.

Somewhat startled by these appearances, I inquired for Mr. Gammidge. The old lady merely pointed with her thumb over her right shoulder towards a dark step-ladder of a staircase, and said—

“Fust floor.”

Going up the stairs, I heard a strange stamping noise, as if three or four heavy couples were practising the polka, and, coming at last to the door of the first-floor room, found that the stamping was accompanied by loud voices and occasional bursts of laughter. Pausing in some hesitation, I observed a small visiting-card wavered to the door, with “Mr. Hippolitus Gammidge” engraved thereon; while just above this announcement some idle hand had chalked a cheerful sketch (probably of Mr. Gammidge himself) which represented a gentleman of the dot and line family standing on his head, with a pipe in one hand and a bottle in the other.

Summoning courage, I knock at length upon Mr.

Gammidge's door. As the stamping just at this moment is particularly vigorous, and my tap particularly feeble, I wait for some time without being answered, and then repeat it. This time the stamping abates for a moment.

"What ho! who calls on Hamlet?" cries a voice within. "Now, an' thou be not John Doe or Richard Roe, enter!"

I open the door upon this invitation, and discover, to my utter astonishment, two young men with their coats off, standing in warlike attitudes in the very middle of the room, with short basket swords in their hands, and shorter pipes in their mouths. There are coloured prints of horses and opera dancers on the walls; dirty books, bottles, packs of cards, hats, boots, slippers, pipes, music, boxing-gloves, walking-sticks, play-bills, cigar-boxes, and other trifles scattered in all directions upon the tables, chimney-piece, chairs, and floor. A handsome grand pianoforte stands not far from the door, with a soiled cloth, two pewter pots, and the remains of some bread and cheese and oysters appropriately decorating one end of it. The prevailing atmosphere of the apartment is strongly suggestive of tobacco.

Feeling my face grow very hot, and retreating a step, I ask timidly if Mr. Gammidge be at home. Whereupon, one of the young men (who, by the way, wears a green velvet smoking-cap and a gigantic false nose with a very red tip) steps forward, lowers his weapon in the most approved military style, bows politely, and says that he is the person in question.

"I—I am sorry to disturb you," I falter, still retreating. "Perhaps, as I come upon business, you will name some other opportunity——"

"No opportunity like the present, Madam," replies Mr. Gammidge, with another bow and a wave of the hand, "The immortal Swan himself says, 'lose no time; delays have dangerous ends.' You may depend the Swan was right, Madam. Will you be pleased to take a chair? I will attend to you in a very few minutes. Just at the present moment I am—ahem!—rather busy."

So I take a chair, feeling very nervous, and Mr. Gam-

midge whispers in the ear of his friend. Presently he turns to me again.

"I am really ashamed," he says, with the same elaborate courtesy, "to take so great a liberty—but, I—in fact—if you will oblige my friend and myself—(by the bye, permit me to introduce my friend, Mr. St. Leger de Vere)—we—we should be so very grateful if you could favour us by—by playing the College Hornpipe."

Here Mr. St. Leger de Vere takes the short pipe from his mouth, and bows; and Mr. Gammidge bows again; and I bow to both of them, and signify that I shall have much pleasure in obliging them, if they will furnish me with the music, of which, up to this moment, I had never heard before. Both gentlemen receive this statement with the most unqualified amazement. Mr. Gammidge is overwhelmed with regret that he does not happen to possess the requisite music, but volunteers to whistle the air over to me—which he does accordingly, and with perfect gravity, holding up the nose with one hand all the while, and revealing a mottled, good-tempered, jovial sort of face, with bushy black whiskers and small twinkling eyes.

It is so simple and marked a melody that I find no difficulty in transferring it, impromptu, to the keys of the piano, and run it over with a facility that fills them with undisguised surprise and pleasure.

"Just so, Ma'am," says Mr. Gammidge, replacing the nose and turning up his shirt-cuff. "If you will play it just so for a few minutes—thank you. This, I may as well tell you, is the celebrated single combat in 'Roderick of the Reefs, or the Smuggler of the Cyclades.' Don't be alarmed—we shall only make a little noise."

And with that, Mr. Gammidge and Mr. St. Leger de Vere begin stamping and clashing, and keeping such wonderful time with their strokes to the accent of the music, that one could almost have told the tune from hearing them. It is really awful to see them so hard at it, and to watch the short black iron swords crossing and re-crossing each other, now high, now low, now to the

grand single combat from "Roderick of the Reefs" with as much vigour and agility as if it were the first time they had tried it that morning.

Mr. Vaughan is leaning gloomily against a lamp-post waiting for me, with his hat drawn over his eyes and his arms folded on his breast. It is a weary hopeless attitude, and till I touch him on the arm he is unaware of my presence. There is no need to tell him the glad news—my face tells it for me.

"What! are you engaged?" he says hurriedly, flushing all over, cheek and brow.

"I am, I am indeed; and now we can have fires every day, and Alice shall have a new frock, and—and oh, I *am* so happy!"

"God bless you!" says my master hoarsely, turning his head from me as he speaks. "God bless you, Natalie. You are an angel!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

BEHIND THE SCENES.

I ATTENDED rehearsal next day. It was the first time I had ever seen a theatre. What a strange place it seemed!

Inside the stage-door—a gloomy side-entrance opening from a dull back street—was a little sentry-box of an office containing a fire-place, a desk, a ledger, a cupboard, and a clerk. The latter stopped me as I was venturing to follow the footsteps of a young girl with a roll of music in her hand.

"Hollo, Miss! where are you going?"

"To the stage, sir," I replied.

"One of the chorus-ladies?"

"Yes, sir."

"Be so good as to sign your name, Miss."

And he handed me a pen and pointed to a blank line in the ledger. He was a very pale, red-haired young man, and wore a bunch of violets in his button-hole.

"Never been here before, Miss?" he asked, examining my signature curiously when I had done.

"Never, sir."

"Perhaps you would like to wait a minute or two till some other lady comes in, to whom I can introduce you? Then you'll have no difficulty in finding your way, and no awkwardness."

"I should be very much obliged to you," I reply gratefully. So he points with the ruler to a little box beside the fire, upon which I sit down and wait, while he writes on in silence. Almost every instant there is some one passing the office-door, and diving down a dismal brick-passage beyond, which looks as if it led direct to the realms of "Chaos and ancient Night." These persons are of various aspects; some old, some mere children, some well, and some poorly dressed. Now a sturdy carpenter, or a painter with his paper-cap—now a swarthy moustachioed man with a violin-case in his hand—now an elegantly attired gentleman with straw-coloured kid gloves and a roll of music tied round with pink ribbon—now a stout elderly woman with a basket and an umbrella—now more carpenters, more violinists—more children, and now two or three giggling girls talking very fast among themselves, and smiling sweetly into the office as they pass. To one of these the pale clerk calls out, when she has got half-way down the chaotic passage.

"I say, Miss Mandeville! Just step here a minute, if you please."

Thinking it is on my account, I rise from my low seat on the box; but he shakes his head, and I resume it just as Miss Mandeville enters.

"A letter for you, Miss Mandeville," he says, taking a pink billet from a card-rack beside his desk and handing it to her with a confidential sort of smile. "It looks interesting, don't it?"

"Have done now, Mr. Simmons!" ejaculates Miss Mandeville playfully, as she snatches the letter from his hand. "You're always up to your nonsense, you are!"

"It was a very nice young man that left it," says Mr.

Simmons, insinuatingly; "but I say nothing—oh dear, no!"

"There, do have done, will you!"

"And he asked a deal of questions, too," adds Mr. Simmons.

"Oh, I don't want to hear what he said!" exclaims Miss Mandeville, looking very much as if she did, all the time. "I hope you didn't satisfy his impertinence—I hate so much of their nonsense!"

"Ah, there's a good many here would like to have half as much admiration," replies the clerk, shrugging his shoulders and returning to the ledger—a signal that he has no time for farther conversation. So Miss Mandeville, after a reluctant pause and a long stare at me, retreats slowly, and Mr. Simmons observes in a whisper,—

"One of the ballet-ladies—not your sort, Miss. There'll be Miss Foster here directly, and she'll go in with you."

And so he writes on again, only to be interrupted almost immediately by the entrance of a gentlemanly-looking man, in a state of considerable excitement. At the sight of this comer Mr. Simmons jumps off his stool and bows with great alacrity.

"Is the manager in his room, Mr. Simmons? And did you hear anything of that rapier I left in the dressing room the night before last? Has a gentleman been here inquiring for me this morning? Any letters? Any parcels? Any news? Any messages?"

"None, sir," replies the clerk deferentially. "The rapier, I believe, is in the charge of Mr. Jenkins. I don't think the manager has been here at all this morning; and no one has called, I am sure."

"Thank you, thank you," says the gentleman, bustling away as rapidly as he came.

The clerk turns to me.

"Do you know who that is, Miss?"

"Not at all," I reply, looking after him with some curiosity. "Who is he?"

"That Miss," says the clerk impressively, "is our

principal tenor gentleman. And here comes Miss Foster! Good morning, Miss Foster—will you be so kind as to show this young lady the way? She is a new arrival."

Miss Foster is a pale girl of about twenty years of age. She is in deep mourning, and has a sad and gentle look that pleases me on the first glance.

"With great pleasure," she says, bowing, and leads the way.

It is gloomier even than it looked, this queer passage, and the ceiling, across which stream faint gleams of blue daylight, is at least sixty feet above. Emerging from it into a curious, open, boarded space, with lots of other passages, and dirty flights of stairs, and mysterious doors opening off in every direction, and a great gloomy, uncertain distance stretching away upon the left, I involuntarily pause and utter a wondering exclamation.

Miss Foster looks at me with some surprise, and says—

"Have you never been behind the scenes?"

"This is the first time I ever entered a theatre in my life," I reply, still surveying the place, "How dreary everything looks! Is this where they act?"

The young lady smiles and shakes her head.

"Those doors," she says, "lead to the wardrobes and dressing rooms; up this flight of stairs is the way to the flies; and along to the left there lies the stage. Would you like to go up a little way and see the flies?"

Not having the least idea of what the "flies" can mean, I assent, and follow her up the broken narrow steps, finding myself presently in a strange upper-world of cranes and cranks, and capstans, and huge rollers, and a perfect forest of iron cables and ropes stretching in every direction. It is more like the deck of a great ship than anything. Advancing to the edge of a kind of gallery, I see a vast boarded plain many feet below, upon which some eighty or a hundred persons are congregated. This plain is abruptly terminated at one side by a row of small lamps, and beyond it lies thick darkness.

"What strange place is this?" I ask, utterly bewildered.

"What are these ropes for? Who are those people all that way below?"

"It is from here that the scenery is lowered," she replies, "and down there is the stage and the actors. This gallery runs all round the three sides, and across where you see those iron pipes pierced with rows of holes, the place is lighted at night with jets of gas. Behind us lie the carpenters' workshops—up above is a second gallery and a place just like this, only much higher—beyond there, where it looks so dark, is the house. By the house," she adds smilingly, "I mean where the audience is placed—the pit, boxes, and galleries. But stay! the orchestra has begun, and we must go down and take our places."

And with this she leads the way back, and in another minute or two I am standing beside her on the stage, and a roll of manuscript music is placed in my hand, with the words "Soprano 1" written on the cover.

Before us stretches a dim vista of the spacious amphitheatre, curtained, partitioned, gilded, and shadowy, where so many hundreds are every night assembled. Standing at a music desk close against the foot-lamps, holding a small baton in his hand, and looking very serious and business-like, is Mr. Gammidge, dressed all in black. Behind him, with their heads just rising above the level of the pit, are congregated some sixty of the sallow moustachioed men, whom I had already supposed to belong to the orchestra. At a small deal table covered with papers and splashes of ink, sit two gentlemen, one of whom, whispers Miss Foster, is the manager, and the other the composer. Not far from these, five or six ladies and gentlemen are gathered in a little knot, chatting merrily among themselves; and farthest back of all, behind the crowd of chorus-singers in which I am standing, a number of women and workmen keep crossing and recrossing, disappearing at the wings, and bustling about in all directions.

There is a faded, sallow air about the chorus. The men look shabby and the women sickly, and they have weak eyes and cotton gloves. Faint lines of light and moted

sunbeams fall here and there, like bright arrows plunging into the gloom, but are swallowed up in the darkness half-way and never reach the ground. Pale ghosts of white draperies hang from box to box. There is dust, inches deep, everywhere and on everything. Some pieces of side-scenery, lolling awkwardly together in a corner, look sad and strange, and every now and then, when there is a momentary lull upon the stage, sounds of scrubbing and hammering are heard from the pit.

Suddenly a little bell is rung, and a dead silence ensues. The singers open their books, Mr. Gammidge waves his baton, and the voices burst out together in full chorus.

To the chorus succeeded a quartett, and to the quartett a song by the tenor, which, though he sang it carelessly enough, and without even rising from his seat, filled me with delight and amazement. Then two more choruses, and then—oh, never shall I forget it!—came a plaintive little ballad, sung by a slight pale lady, upon whom my attention became exclusively riveted. Her eyes were large, glowing, and expressive; her brown hair was parted and drawn back quite simply from her white forehead. She was not beautiful, but there was a “soul of goodness” and intellect in her face that surpassed all mere loveliness of feature. She sang!—it would be vain for me to attempt a description of that pure and exquisite style, that intensity of expression, that wondrous voice!—She sang, and while she sang I forgot all in the world beside. Theatre—London—all faded away, and I could only press my hands upon my heart and listen. When it was over I turned to my nearest neighbour like one in a dream, and said breathlessly—

“Who is she?”

“Madame Malibran.”

Excepting that she sang again several times, I remember nothing more of that morning’s rehearsal. The immensity of the one sensation overwhelmed all other impressions. I went through my duties mechanically; and the four hours during which I stood there glided past like one. Then Mr. Gammidge came up, with a conscious

sort of twinkling smile about his eyes, and, after introducing me formally to the eight or ten ladies who were destined to form my "division," shook hands with me as we parted—a distinction which called up a great many stares and whispers from the ladies in question.

"Happy to welcome you to the theatre, Mam'selle," said Mrs. McGillivray, a tall bony Scotchwoman, with a gingham umbrella and a meek husband. "What d'ye think of the new opera? Wretched poor stuff to *my* mind!"

"I confess," I replied, "that I have heard nothing but Madame Malibran's divine singing."

"Divine singing! divine! well, I never!" exclaimed a spare, angular little person, just introduced to me under the name of Miss Miles. "It's really a mystery to me what the world can see in that woman! All *I* know is, that when I was first soprano (singing all her parts, too), at the Dublin theatre, no public would have tolerated such a style as that!"

"But her voice——" I began.

"Her voice! oh, I don't dispute that! Her voice is all very well; but her style! Bah! Her style's abominable!"

"Sheer spite," said Mrs. McGillivray, looking after Miss Miles with a smile and a shrug as she bustled away. "Sheer spite and nothing else. Miles *did* come out, some twenty years ago, on the Dublin stage, and failed miserably. Poor Miles! You can't be five minutes in the same room with her before you hear some boast about the Dublin theatre! There goes little Hammond the drummer—we call him the devil with two sticks! That red-nosed man is Sims, the treasurer—you'll soon have an immense respect for him, my dear Mam'selle, in virtue of his office. That's Mr. St. Albans, the second tenor—that sandy little fellow with the pug-nose. His name's Jones; but he fancies St. Albans suits him better. They say he's in love with Malibran. Maybe; but I think he's too much in love with himself to have room in his heart for anybody else. This fat man, with his back to us, is Cook, the scene-painter—a good-natured, good-for-nothing, tipsy sort of chap, with never a penny in his

pocket. D'ye see those three gawky girls in brown with their ugly mother? Their name is Turner, but we've christened 'em Envy, Hatred, and Malice; and Mrs. T. All Uncharitableness! Ha! ha! ha! Good, isn't it? But a theatre's a sad place—a sad place, Mam'selle Metz! The people in it are *so* sarcastic! No one's reputation is safe in anybody's hands here; and, between you and me, that demure-looking little girl with the green eyes has the bitterest tongue that ever wagged in this world! But I never encourage such people myself, however amusing their remarks may be! Ha! here comes that sly Italian, Romani, the first violin. Good morning, Signor Romani."

Signor Romani bowed without replying, and, lifting his dark eyes to mine in a rapid, searching glance, passed on.

"Never knew such a queer, silent, unsociable animal as that Romani!" said Mrs. McGillivray. "To my mind, he's all conceit and reserve, and as ugly as a vampire!"

"He puts me in mind of Mephistophiles, with that white face and those wild-looking black eyes," added another lady standing by.

"Quite diabolical, in fact," chimed in a third.

I left them occupied upon this grateful theme, and made my way into the street. The daylight half blinded me at first, so that I did not see Miss Foster close beside me. She extended her hand to me, for our roads lay differently.

"Good bye," she said, with a sweet smile. "We shall meet again to-morrow. It is said that the theatre will re-open next week. Good bye."

So we parted; and this was my first day's experience of theatrical life.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MAIDEN AND THE MYSTIC.

It is almost always difficult to tell how acquaintanceships spring up, and at what point they first become merged into the more familiar relations. Two singularly opposite intercourses resulted from my engagement at Drury Lane Theatre, and the first of these two was with Katharine Foster.

She lived quite alone in the upper story of a small house rented by one Miss Tomlinson, theatrical dressmaker, who took in-door apprentices, let unfurnished apartments, and resided in some small street opening off the Thames side of the Strand. Leaning out of Kate's little window,—(taking due care not to upset the geranium pots on the heads of the foot-passengers)—you could see the broad river rolling by in sunlight and moonlight at the farther end, and hear the hoarse cries of the watermen, and the intermittent panting of the river-steamers smoking to and fro.

She was an orphan. Her only sister, a fragile child whom she had tended with more than a mother's care, had died not long since, and left her desolate. She had a lover somewhere—far out at sea. He had been gone these four years past, and she had not heard from him for eighteen months or more. He might be dead or lost by this time—who could tell? But she seldom spoke of this. The furniture of her solitary rooms was the same by which she had been surrounded in that still country vicarage of her childhood. The dusty bronze timepiece had recorded every hour of her life. The old-fashioned silver watch, suspended by a black ribbon above the fire-place, had been her father's. It was the same antique book-case—the same shrill piano—the same easy-chair. The place only was changed, and the home was home no longer!

Between the door and the window hung a little sketch of a young girl resting her cheek upon her hand. Close

by her bed's head, in the adjoining chamber, was suspended a small portrait representing a sunburnt youth in a naval uniform.

Poor Kate! These trifles epitomized her little story, and told it in fewer and more touching words than I can give to it. It was a simple life, made up of feelings, and meek sorrows, and patient recollections—gentle and useful within its own narrow radius; and faintly lit by the wan lustre of a fading hope.

I have nothing to relate of her but this. It is not much. A few pieces of dumb old furniture, or a glance at her pale face and sweet serious eyes would do more. She was one of those quiet heroines who glide all silently through life, and all unknown—who love and are beloved by two or three only in this world—of whose joys and woes no pen makes record; and whose good deeds, being cloaked as preciously as others cloak their shame, reach no ear and meet no eye save one in heaven.

From the moment of our first meeting, I was interested for her. When I came to know her well, I loved her with a true friendship. At the theatre, where we saw each other daily, we found little opportunity of intercourse; but our homes were not far distant, and a time soon came when she would bring her work round to Mr. Vaughan's, or I would take my book, and sit and read with her in her lodgings.

Besides, we passed all our Sunday evenings together, and my master and little Alice welcomed her ere long as much for her own sake as mine.

The second of the two was Silvio Romani.

It was my master's unfailling custom to attend me to and from the theatre on the nights of performance. Sometimes he would wait there for me, and sometimes return home for the three hours during which I was occupied. When he remained on the spot, he most frequently mingled with the orchestral performers, amongst whom (like Mozart) he found a larger share of mind and a more intellectual tone of conversation than prevailed among the inferior ranks of vocalists. Here chance, or fate, led him

to form a sort of desultory acquaintance with Signor Romani. One night they began an argument on some remote subject or other, and, being interrupted by the progress of the piece, deferred the continuation of it till the next evening. The next evening they argued it afresh, and still came to no conclusion; so it ended in my master inviting him to return home with us and sup. He did so—came again after the lapse of a week—came oftener—installed himself, somehow, as our familiar guest, and was looked upon in time almost as a member of our household.

Mine has been a varied life. During that portion of it which was devoted to a public career, I chanced upon many strange characters; but never met I one so strange as Silvio Romani.

In attempting a description of him, I find myself baffled at the very onset. I know not where or how to begin—whether with his exterior or inner self. Both are inconceivably difficult to deal with, and each so singularly illustrate, interpret, and bear upon the other, that I can only take them confusedly, and as they present themselves.

He was tall and slightly built, and stooped in the shoulders. His long slender hands were a very marvel of attenuation, and looked as if they were carved in the purest marble. You could see the red light through them when he held them to the fire, and they were crossed all over with blue branching veins, like those upon his forehead. When he was playing, or became much excited, these veins throbbed with a visible pulsation. In repose, his countenance wore an habitually weary expression. I do not mean by this that it was the outward prostration indicative of physical fatigue. It was rather that melancholy languor resulting from long thought and protracted vigils—that lassitude of spirit which hangs upon the drooping eyelid, and lurks in the faint lines about the worn temples; which bespeaks the wasting fire kindled from within, and spiritualizes, so to speak, the man who bears it. His hair was long and black. His lips thin and

tremulous. His eyes large, dark, miraculously brilliant,—yet with this peculiarity that, when conversing upon any indifferent topic, or mingling with ordinary people, their lustre became for the time extinguished. It appeared that they needed the contact of some powerful excitement to strike fire from them. At such times there was something absolutely startling in the living energy that seemed to leap out of them. One vivid flash transformed and illuminated the whole countenance, and, as the sudden lightning strips the night from some wild landscape, revealed a glimpse of the passionate, wilful, enthusiastic nature beneath. His life was absorbed in morbid studies of the unattainable and the unknown. His mind fed upon abstract theories—upon strange branches of psychologic science—upon remote and fearful superstitions. Not a plan of metaphysics, not a scheme of gloomy philosophy, not a fear, phantasm or phenomenon in all the history of the mind of man that was not familiar, yet terrible, to him. To the mystic side of Nature he was constitutionally susceptible, and he had indulged this disposition till it mastered him wholly. Shudderingly he trod the threshold of the world of shadows, and could not tear himself away. With those conjectural systems that people universal space with spiritual life—with the material and immaterial philosophies—with the purely sceptical and the purely fanciful—with all that treats of fate, freewill, and futurity, he was alike acquainted; and, being the sworn follower of none, gleaned here and there the fragments of his own wild code of disbelief and extravagant credulities.

It was a mind that preyed upon itself, and he knew it. He was tremblingly alive to the baneful influence of the studies that so fascinated him—nervous to agony—endued with a physical organization the most fragile and impressionable. Many a time, at the mere narration of a dream, or a ghost-tale, I have seen his colour change, and the dew rise, beadlike, on his pallid brow. Many a time, when pursuing one of those abstract themes which were his perilous delight, I have known him rise and pace the room

in uncontrollable agitation, and have heard strange doubts and dreamy guesses force their way from lips that quivered while they uttered them.

Sometimes his wayward mood led him to express its changes in the language of his art, and he has often broken off abruptly in the very midst of speaking, snatched up his violin, and translated the unfinished sentence into sound. And when he did this! . . . Who shall describe the mysterious melancholy of his improvisations?—who reproduce those elfin flights of a capricious genius, those strains alternately grotesque, rapid, or elegiac? The violin was no longer a violin in his hands—it was an imprisoned spirit torn and convulsed by emotions which were the reflex of his own—a wailing, throbbing, impassioned thing—a wild voice now shrieking wofully, and intermittent as the night-winds; now moaning a monotonous melody consisting of but four or five notes, yet thrilling the hearers with vague horror and dismay. In his lighter moments—for there were even periods when a sort of fitful mirth possessed him—he called this instrument his Wraith, his Banshee, his Socratic demon!

At such times he dropt the dreamer for the satirist, and let the lurid light of his mocking fancy play round and over every topic, sacred or profane, which chanced to present itself. I then found myself irresistibly reminded of a name which I had heard applied to him on the very first occasion that I saw him—Mephistophiles!

These moods, however, were exceptional, and I was glad of it; for then I dreaded him!

CHAPTER XXVI.

MUSIC AND METAPHYSICS.

"THERE are remembrances for which no philosophy will account—sensations to which experience vainly seeks a parallel. Few persons will deny that they have beheld faces and scenes which were new to them, and yet familiar—of which they seemed to have dreamt in time gone by; and which (without any visible cause) produced a painfully intimate impression upon their minds. I have myself dreamed of a place, and again forgotten that dream. Years have passed, and the dream has returned to me, unaltered in the minutest particular. I have at last come suddenly upon that scene in some spot never visited before, and have recognised it tree for tree, rock for rock, as it stood before me in the dream. Then the dream ceased to be a dream and became one with the reality. Neither would, henceforward, have been complete to me without the other, and from that union I learned to wrest from Nature a portion of her obscurest secrets. Do not these fragmentary reminiscences seem to establish a mysterious link between Death, Life, and Sleep? Is it not a fundamental law in the philosophy of mind that we can think of nothing which we have not perceived? What is the induction, if it be not that these things have been perceived by us, though not, perhaps, in our present condition of being?"

"You believe, then, in the doctrine of pre-existence!" I exclaimed.

My master growled over his pipe and listened in silence.

"I believe in the immortality of the soul," replied the Italian. "I feel that I am, and that I have been."

"I feel that I am, and I hope that I *shall be*."

"Eternity," said he, "is a circle. By looking only to a future immortality, you deny the half of its circuit, and reduce its figure to a crescent. Forgive me if I speak in symbols; but the philosophy of which I treat is as yet only

in part developed, and until its laws can be evolved from their present obscurity, I am under the necessity of using figurative expressions to denote the relations of things. But we were talking of the soul. You profess to believe that it is immortal, and in the same breath advance an opinion, which tends to establish a totally adverse theory. For the soul there is, properly speaking, neither past nor future. It is an everlasting Now. It must have existed from all time. Not admitting this, what guarantee have you that it will continue to be during all time to come? That which shall have no end can have had no beginning. To be born is the same as to die. Both are transitional—not creative or final."

"Silvio Romani," said my master, taking the meerschaum from his lips, and speaking for the first time since the conversation had been started, "you are a Brahmin!"

"I am an humble student in the courts of philosophy," replied the Italian, gravely.

"But this is the wild theory of the Metempsychosis!" expostulated my master.

"Tradition," said Romani, "is the type of truth. At the bottom of every legend, however savage and remote, lies a perception of eternity."

"Then this Metempsychosis of the Hindoos"—I began.

"—Is not merely the vague dream of the unlettered Oriental," said Romani.

"And you think that you have lived before?"

"I am so persuaded."

"But," I pursued, "can you summon back any remembrances, Signor Romani? Are you conscious of having enjoyed a condition of pre-existence?"

The Italian shuddered, and walked over to the window.

"The caverns of the mind," said he, "are obscure; but not impenetrable. To those who fear not the terrors of its mazy paths, the truth which lies beyond may not be utterly inaccessible. I—I confess," he continued, in a low and awe-struck tone—"I confess that I have ventured far into that shadowy perspective—farther, perhaps, than

many have dared to tread. But who shall tell the secrets of a past vitality? What language shall picture forth the gigantic outlines sculptured on the portals of Infinity? What prophetic tongue interpret those hieroglyphics which—which—"

His voice faltered and sank to a whisper. A long and profound silence ensued.

Presently he turned to the harpsichord, and laid his thin hand (as if still deep in thought, and half unconscious) upon the keys. This action seemed to awaken some new subject in his mind, for he sighed heavily, as if relieved, and placing himself upon the music-stool, sat for a long time looking fixedly at the ground. Then he touched a single note—another, and another, scattering detached fragments of melody, like the first-falling drops of a spring shower. Soon the other hand followed, and a movement wandering, pleading, and impassioned as the voice of the Lurley, grew beneath the touches of his fingers.

Lost in a tumultuous dream, half reverie, half speculation, I lean my head upon my hands and listen.

His mystic fancies, his wild theories and wilder illustrations, have produced upon me sensations similar to those which are the result of opium. These his playing aids still farther to exaggerate, and my very senses become chained up by the magic of his art.

Gradually the character of the movement changes, and, as it were, fades or melts into a flowing andante, visionary and intoxicating as the breath of fresh violets. A strange fire glows in his eager eyes—his pale face, looking earnestly forward, becomes lighted up from within; the breath seems to flutter on his lips—the inspiration of his genius is upon him! Now the melody wanders, and is succeeded by broken, creeping, seeking phrases, infinitely modulated. Now comes a momentary pause, which is suddenly interrupted by a weird, ærial, chattering flight of notes, sustained by both hands alternately, and followed by a shivering treble passage. Then one or two low notes drop in at intervals deep down in the bass—a thickening

inner-part is taken up by the left hand—it is worked gradually into a massive introduction—swells in power, richness, volume—remains suspended on the ear in one solemn chord—is followed by a breathless silence, and then—then the subject of a Fugue, quaint, marked, and sonorous as a human voice, speaks out in unaccompanied distinctness!

From this moment he is carried away by the suggestive theme. He wanders on and on, loses himself in profound intervolutions and resonant harmonies, tracks it through a thousand imitations, extensions, and changes, and suddenly, when in mid-career, breaks off—pushes away his seat—comes over to where I am sitting, and flinging himself upon a hassock at my feet, says impetuously—

“Enough of music and metaphysics! Enough of philosophy! Talk to me, Mademoiselle Natalie, talk to me awhile! Your voice does me good, and to-night I need its soothing influence!”

CHAPTER XXVII.

TRAVELLING SKETCHES.

THE spring-time came and went—the summer-season wore away—autumn, brown autumn, withered the scant leaves on London trees, and filled the stagnant squares with sultry heats. Everywhere in the fashionable quarters of the town one saw the drawing-room shutters of fine houses closed, and library-windows filled with sheets of dusty newspapers. Drapers' assistants languished behind counters, and thought with indignant envy of Mr. Carter, the shop-walker, who was enjoying Gravesend and a fortnight's holiday. Every nook and corner became infested with a plague of flies, and grocers were miserable men. All the cabs that passed seemed to be laden with carpet-bags and boxes, and not a line of bare wall or hoarding but was

placarded with advertisements of cheap trips, fast steamers, and excursions of pleasure. All the world was either gone or going out of town, and so Drury Lane Theatre closed for the usual vacation.

Closed for three months. Closed upon my master's hopes, and put off all consideration of the great opera till next season! Closed upon our temporary prosperity, and brought us face to face with poverty again! Something must be done, and some scheme contrived by which to live.

Happily, such a plan did suggest itself, and was carried into effect within a week after my engagement had ceased. The idea was Signor Romani's. He proposed that we should arrange a little musical entertainment; that we should perform it ourselves; that it should consist of selections from classical and modern composers; and that we should give it at various country towns round London.

We wanted money and fresh air. The child had grown thin, and Mr. Vaughan was out of health and spirits. The proposition looked feasible, and, being supported by so many powerful arguments, was adopted. A couple of days sufficed to choose the music, arrange the line of route, and get a stock of programmes ready printed. Mr. Vaughan was to be our pianist—to accompany the songs, to introduce and illustrate each school with some few appropriate observations, and to appear as general manager of our little company. Signor Romani was to join him in the sonatas written by Beethoven, Weber, and Mozart for violin and piano, and to perform solos of his own composition. I, of course, would be the vocalist of the party. They both said that I was now fully competent to the task; but, although I knew that I had made a vast progress during the last few months, I felt very nervous with the responsibility before me.

The scheme was proposed one Monday evening, and on the following Saturday we left London. The entertainment was to be styled "Illustrations of the History of Music," and for our first resting-place and débüt, we chose the town of Guildford.

How pleasant it was, journeying outside the coach between the long green hedges of the English highroads! On either side fields, and farmhouses, and slopes of gold-red corn with reapers in among the sheaves, and way-side inns, and villages, and, now and then, glimpses of a winding river and a tract of deep green pasturage! The country looked strangely level to my eyes, and yet there was a charm about it, too. A charm in its fertility, its air of wealth, and peace, and homeliness. A charm, above all, in the rich autumn season—in the hedges brilliant with red berries—in the hearty life of harvest time—in the warm misty distances, and the fresh perfume from meadow-sweet and wild-brier tree.

Then to see the child's wonder and admiration as we went along; to watch how the breeze brought the long-absent colour to her cheek and blew about the loosened tresses of her hair—to mark how this called up an unwonted smile on Mr. Vaughan's lip, and how even the Italian forbore all graver subjects for awhile, and, sitting close behind me, talked of Italy, and of his native poets—to enjoy all these things, and all the novel incidents of the road, was happiness indeed!

Thus cheerfully passed our first day's journey, and that night we slept at Reigate.

It is Tuesday evening. My master and Romani have been busy all to-day and yesterday, preparing for our first concert. The music-hall has been engaged—programmes have been left at the houses of the most influential inhabitants—tickets are exhibited in all the stationers', book-sellers', and music-dealers' windows. We have even waited on the Mayor, and he has taken seats for his entire family; and now we are all dressed and waiting in the room behind the platform, peeping out occasionally through the chink of the door, to see how the hall fills.

It is very cold here, and we have not thought to order a fire. My teeth chatter, and though I ascribe it all to

the wretched atmosphere, I know in my heart that terror has a great deal to do with it.

A quarter past eight, and at half-past we begin !

"There are plenty of people in the one-shilling seats," says my master, coming back from another reconnoitre ; "but there are more empty benches than full ones in the half-crown places."

"*Maladetto !*" mutters the Italian, breathing upon his fingers. "I can scarcely feel the strings for cold !"

And so we shiver away the remaining fifteen minutes, and then go up a short flight of steps, and find ourselves upon the platform facing the audience. Here stands a grand piano hired for the evening ; a table with our music ranged in its order ; a desk for Romani, and two chairs placed to the front, on which, after the customary salute and a round of faint applause, we take our seats till our turn comes.

And now Mr. Vaughan, standing by the piano with one hand behind his back and a programme in the other, addresses the assembly in a few straightforward and well-chosen sentences. His object, he says, is to bring before them such examples from the classical and modern music of England, Italy, and Germany, as may best serve to illustrate the epochs of the art, and afford to his listeners an opportunity of forming some just estimation of the relative value, characteristics, and progress of the various schools. To this end he purposes introducing in the First Part a selection of instrumental and vocal gleanings from the works of Henry Purcell, Palestrina, Handel, Arne, Mozart, and Bach—in the Second, certain specimens from the operatic and chamber music of Beethoven, Weber, Spohr, Bishop, Balfe, and others.

He is so self-possessed, and has, moreover, such an aspect of rugged power, that I cannot forbear looking at him, almost forgetting my own nervousness the while. Having finished, he takes his place at the instrument and opens the entertainment. The approbation is but trifling when he concludes, and the duet with Romani, which follows, produces as little effect.

It will be my turn next!

Glancing along the rows of upturned faces, with gaps here and there where seats are vacant, I see people whispering, and in one corner a young man sketching in his pocket-book. In front sits the Mayor (yawning behind his programme), supported on one side by his three daughters, and on the other by his wife and four sons. What would I not give to escape!

And now the time is come.

"Come, Natalie!" whispers my master. "Courage; you can do it!"

I am so nervous that I do not know how I sing the opening bars—indeed, up to this day I have no recollection of having sung them at all. I am in a whirlwind—concert-room, audience, friends, all vanish from before my eyes, and it is only by a strong effort that I preserve myself from falling. After a few moments, I seem to hear the clear tones of my own voice rising above the accompaniment, like a bird from the forest—as if some other person were singing and I were but a listener. Gradually this strange sensation subsides—the sense and majesty of the divine words recall me to myself—a strange enthusiasm, a tide of religious exultation inspires me, and pours itself forth in the superhuman gladness of that magnificent song in which the people of Zion are bidden to "Rejoice greatly."

A burst of applause breaks from every part of the room when I conclude. Mr. Vaughan has not even time to finish the closing symphony before the cries of "encore!" are loud in our ears. My heart is still beating, but not with apprehension, and I am summoned back to repeat the air.

And now all goes "merry as a marriage bell." The success is made—the audience warmed—the approbation hearty and frequent. I am again encored, and this time in Ariel's song, a delicious little canzonet, fresh and sparkling as a dewdrop. Mr. Vaughan has to repeat the finale to one of Mozart's pianoforte sonatas, and Signor Romani is called upon for a second performance of the famous "Chaconne"

by Bach. And so Part the First goes off with a degree of éclat that puts us all in high spirits, and is only exceeded by the still more brilliant success of Part the Second. This time Mr. Vaughan and the Italian are much applauded, but the encores are chiefly mine. Desdemona's romanza in *Otello*, the well-known finale to *La Cenerentola*, and the grand scena from *Der Freischütz*, are all redemanded.

What a merry little supper we have that night when all is over—what schemes for the future—what glowing expectations! How delicious is the flavour of the cold roast beef and salad, and what nectar is that thin Marsala, with which my master insists on celebrating my triumph!

We have cleared the incredible sum of five pounds twelve by this first concert, and it is quite evident that we shall make nothing less than a fortune before we have done!

A night's rest and returning daylight calms somewhat of our first exhilaration—especially when the waiter produces our bill at breakfast-time. However, we have done well at Guildford, and turn our faces cheerfully towards Reading.

It were needless for me to linger over every incident of this travelling period, pleasant and various though it was. Enough if I mention that we journeyed from town to town with more or less success, occasionally remaining to give a second entertainment in any place where we found ourselves more than commonly prosperous.

It was a very happy life, and serviceable in every way to me. Of what is called mere "animal spirits" I had never possessed perhaps even the ordinary share; but I had been always cheerful, and Madame de Wald used to say that "Natalie spread an atmosphere round her like the life and sunshine of a spring morning." Something of this returned to me during our country tour. The pleasure of success, I doubt not, bore as important a part in my recovery as the fresh air and change of scene; but

the old wound was still there, only the bitter anguish had passed away, and I no longer sank beneath that ever-present sense of evil which used at first to dim the very daylight around me like an autumnal thunder-cloud. Over the roughest new-made grave the green grass spreads at last, and even the summer-flowers blossom there in time!

"I wonder," said the Italian, striking his foot upon the lettered pavement, and waking a hollow reverberatory echo beneath, "I wonder what the dust laid dreaming in these old vaults would say, if we could make it rise and put on flesh, and tell us the experience of the grave! What a ghastly story of the worm and the charnel it would be! How say you, Natalie—would you like to hear it?"

The old cloisters, with their exquisite gothic arches pierced in rich and various traceries, surrounded the quiet quadrangle, and stretched away from us on either side in cool and shadowy perspective. Beyond them rose the white Byzantine towers of this beautiful old cathedral of the city of Norwich; and now and then there came to us faint pealings of the organ within. It seemed almost a sacrilege to speak thus of the dead who had mouldered peaceably away in the monkish gloom of aisle and cloister, and lain there undisturbed for so many silent centuries.

"Hush!" I said, involuntarily.

He turned and looked hastily at me. Presently he grew grave, and said, abstractedly—

"True. They are dreaming, and we will not wake them. When we lie down and rest, we dream. Perhaps, when the body is laid to rest utterly in death, it but leaves the spiritual part still freer, and the soul dreams on for ever! Who knows?"

One of his speculative moods had come upon him. He leant against an old tomb surmounted by a group of kneeling figures carved in stone, and, looking down at the worn flagstones, every one of which bore some funereal inscription, thus continued:—

"What is it to dream? Do any circumstances in our

physical nature or individual character help to throw a light upon the psychology of dreams? It was the belief of the Egyptian sage and of the Chaldean seer that men's souls existed separately from their bodies, and that, although during life the vital powers were only available through the grosser corporeal organs, vitality itself (the Promethean fire) dwelt in the soul. Why may not this thing be? To dream is to subordinate the body to the brain. Sleep bestows a temporary freedom upon our spiritual nature, and while the body is detached from all sensual impressions, the operations of the soul become clearer and more accurate. Events long forgotten are recalled—places and people beheld in former stages of existence are reproduced—scenes the most distant are visited and observed—the veil of ages is withdrawn from the Future as well as from the Past, and the Dreamer becomes the Prophet! Such, in a more exalted degree, is the condition of the mesmeric *clairvoyant*. His mind is as totally separated from his body as it would be in death. The nervous or spiritual essence is alone at work. He is a spirit for the time being. His eye penetrates all the secrets of Nature. He can cure the sick, and tell what is passing in America as readily as that which is going on in an adjoining chamber. He no longer makes use of his bodily organs. His eyes see not, his ears hear not, his body is insensible to pain. He sees, hears, feels with the soul only, and in this state of second being his spiritual self goes forth and visits, not only the people and places of external life, but the dim eternity of past ages, and the awful arcana of that which is to Be!"

I was about to make some reply, when a heavy tread woke up the cloister echoes, and a shadow passed between the arches on the opposite side of the quadrangle. It was Mr. Vaughan.

"Ho! tomb-seekers, archæologists, ghouls!" he called to us. "Why are you lingering in this place? The congregation has left, and if you come inside now, you will have a chance of seeing the organ!"

We hurried into the cathedral. All here was silent,

cool, and wrapt in a half gloom, like the dim light by which we see in dreams. Our footsteps and even our whispers seemed to vibrate from pillar to pillar, from arch to arch, and to be lost at last in the mazes of the great roof overhead. I followed my companions mechanically through the deserted choir, where the chanting of the last "Amen" appeared yet to linger on the air, and where the books of the choristers were left open in the stalls. Up a narrow staircase and into the dark little organ-loft we went. It was a dusky, dusty, antique-looking crib, with the old black organ rising up at the back, and the vast mysterious space of aisle and vaulted avenue stretching away before.

My master sat down on the vacant stool, examined the date emblazoned curiously in front, read the almost illegible labels on the stops, and passed his hand lightly along the surface of the keys. These were all of ebony, and worn into deep hollows by the touches of centuries. Presently Romani went round to the back and inflated the mighty lungs, and Mr. Vaughan began to play.

The music "rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes," and seemed to blend in luxuriously with the soft *minor* twilight of the surrounding architecture. The fantastic theories of the Italian were yet ringing in my ears. They confused and yet fascinated me—wrapt me in long reveries, and coloured with the hues of unreality the things of actual life. I leaned over the little gallery, and, gazing up dreamily at the strange carvings on the roof, lost myself in a maze of odd conjectures, wherein the remote and mystic history there represented, the spiritual philosophy of Romani, and the symphony played by my master, became interwoven curiously with each other, like the silk and silver threads in bygone tapestries.

And how interesting they are, these stone pictures studying the great vault of the roof-mask in Norwich Cathedral! Contrasted with the extreme simplicity of the round bluff-looking Saxon arches, and the gigantic columns with their plain convex capitals, how odd and fanciful look these processions of quaint little Eastern figures;

these towers and palms; these sculptured commentaries on the World's Book! I had been familiar from my childhood with Gothic architecture, through the single specimen ever before me in our Fribourg Cathedral; I had lately seen the Abbey at Westminster; and little more than a year had passed since that mighty structure towering beside the impatient Rhine at Cologne had recited to me with its thousand-fold voices the grand unfinished poem of its history—yet I had never beheld anything resembling this sturdy, unadorned English church of the eleventh century! Here was neither canopy nor saint, tracery, decorated spandril, or foliated cornice; none of that “manifoldness” which Goethe praises so eloquently in his description of Strasburg Minster, and calls, with pardonable vanity, “German” instead of “Gothic” architecture—still it impressed me the more, perhaps, for the strength, the serenity, and massiveness of its proportions.

I was interrupted suddenly by Mr. Vaughan.

“Put the poetry of the place into words, Natalie,” said he, touching me on the arm and smiling as if he could read that which was passing through my mind. “Sing something.”

I sang Mozart's “Agnus Dei” from the Fourth Mass; that soothing and prayerful solo drawn from the intensest sympathies of the great master of expression, and answering, in its supplicating tenderness, to the innermost yearnings of every nature. It was a great pleasure so to sing it, and yet a strange melancholy lay at my heart and communicated itself to the tones of my voice. As the last note trembled and died away into the silence, I turned and saw an old man standing in an angle of shadow just by the entrance to the organ gallery. He was a little, misshapen, sorrowful old man, with thin white hair, and light anxious eyes that wandered eagerly from place to place. As I paused, looking at him, he came forward, guiding himself along by the organ with one hand, and extending the other with a feeble, wandering gesture, which told me, without a more careful study of his countenance, that he was blind.

"Who sings?" said he, stopping suddenly as if to listen for our whereabouts. "What angel brings airs from heaven to wake the sleeping echoes of these dusky aisles? Speak to me."

Roused from the surprise with which I had regarded him, touched with pity, too, for the wavering step and the irresolute tone, I went nearer and answered him.

"We are strangers," I said. "Strangers and musicians, travelling professionally from town to town. We are here for the purpose of giving a concert this evening in the theatre, and, finding the church empty, made our way up to look at the organ. I am afraid we have taken a great liberty in playing upon it. Are you the organist?"

He listened very attentively, with his head inclined a little on one side, and his sightless eyes turned full upon me. When I had done, he put out his hand again.

"It is as sweet to hear you speak as to hear you sing," he said. "Your voice is gentle, and I am sure your smile is beautiful. Give me your hand."

I took the trembling hand in both of mine, but he disengaged and passed it gently over one of them.

"It is small," said he. "Small, and soft, and slender. Small enough for a child's, and yet your speech tells me that it is a woman's. You are young, lady?"

I smiled, and told him I was nineteen years of age.

"Nineteen," he repeated to himself. "Nineteen! And you are a vocalist?"

"I hope to deserve the name some day," I replied.

"Your very voice is music," he said, still retaining my hand. "I am the organist of this cathedral, and I am an old man. I have lived here all my life—all my long life; heard the fine London singers at our Festivals for the last sixty—ay, the last sixty-three years; but never one with a voice like yours! Will you sing for me again?"

I sang for him again and again, till the shadows began to thicken. Then we shook hands with him, and bade him farewell.

"Must you go?" he asked, plaintively. "Shall I never listen to you again?"

"Come to-night to the theatre," said Mr. Vaughan, cheerily. "I will give you a card, if you like to take the trouble."

The old man shook his head.

"Not in a public place," he said, "not in a public place. The cathedral is my home, and the organ here my second self. I have never seen either; but I love to imagine them. Perhaps your eyes behold them differently, yet no one knows them so well as I. I am familiar with every echo of the building. I know every pillar by its touch. There is not one of all the forest of pipes in this great instrument but sings to me with the accent of an old, old friend. The place is peopled for me with pleasant recollections. Lady, I would not hear you in the theatre to-night. This is the holiest and dearest spot in all the world to me, and you will henceforth be associated with it. Your voice and your kind hand will come back to me many a time when I am sitting up here alone in my darkness. Thank you, and heaven bless you."

We shook hands with him once more, and turned to go. As he stood leaning on the organ, seeming to look after us, it struck me that there was something he had wished to say and left unsaid. I lingered, and turned back.

"Can I—can I do anything more for you?" I said, hesitatingly.

A transient flush gleamed across his pale countenance.

"I should like," he faltered—"I should like, if—if you will let me, to pass my hand once over your face."

I bent towards him, and the trembling touch glided rapidly along my cheek and brow.

"Thanks," he murmured. "Thanks. Now I have your portrait. Go, child. Go, and all good fortune go with you. Peter! are you there?"

A small voice, that seemed a long way off, answered shrilly in the affirmative.

"Blow then!"

He averted his head and busied himself at the organ; but I saw that the blind eyes were filled with tears, and that he sought to hide them. My own sight grew dim,

and I hastened silently away, scarcely observing, as I went, the frantic struggles of a very little boy at the back, who was hanging on by both hands to the great beam of the bellows, and whose duty it was to play at a laborious game of see-saw with the wind.

I found them waiting for me beside a huge pillar to the left of the entrance—the largest pillar, it seemed, in all the place. There we lingered for a moment to take our farewell glance, and, as we did so, a soft and sad voluntary came creeping along the air, like a mournful voice.

“He is bidding us farewell,” said Mr. Vaughan, compassionately.

It was too dark now to see him distinctly, but I could discern the white head amid the gloom of the far recess. At the door I paused again to look back at it, and the sighing music faded behind us as we stepped out into the paved court-yard, and saw the sunset glowing on the Gothic gateway beyond.

So it ended, that little episode, and we met never again. Yet it abides with me as a touching picture, and often and often, as vividly as when I last looked back, I see the looming organ and the blind old man, and the great cathedral encompassing them like a frame.

Alas! how many years ago, how many years ago it was! They tell me that both instrument and player have passed away long since, and been replaced, and forgotten.

“Now, by the bones of my grandfather, this is pleasant!” exclaimed a jovial voice close behind us. “Who would have dreamt of meeting Mademoiselle Metz and Signor Romani in this part of the world! Who’s your friend? Pray introduce me.”

It was Mr. Gammidge. We were strolling up the shady side of the High-street, at Southampton, close by the beautiful old Bar, when he overtook and thus accosted us. He wore a blue jacket with gilt buttons; a blue-striped shirt with a very broad collar; a low straw hat with a

very broad brim; flowing white trousers, and straw-coloured kid gloves.

Being introduced to Mr. Vaughan, he pulled off his hat with a flourish, and made a nautical bow.

"You see me," said he, surveying himself with undisguised satisfaction, "engaged in the active representation of the real British sailor—'positively for this night only—by express desire.' The fact is, some friends of mine have a yacht here, and I make myself very unwell three or four times a-week by taking little pleasure-trips along the coast."

"I scarcely knew you at first, Mr. Gammidge," said Romani, with a half-smile.

"My dear sir, remember, if you please, that 'Jove sometimes walks disguised,' and that those are the sentiments of the immortal Swan. By the way, what are you doing at Southampton? Anything pro—fessional?"

Mr. Vaughan explained the nature of our entertainment, and presented Mr. Gammidge with a card of admission and an invitation to supper, both of which were immediately accepted.

"Shall be delighted to hear you again, Mademoiselle Metz," he said. "I grieve that your beautiful voice should be lost in chorus singing—by the bones of my grandfather, I grieve for it! We must try and find you something a little better next season, if possible. Anything that *I* can do, you know, shall not be wanting." Here Mr. Gammidge, who had offered me his arm some minutes back, gave my hand a gentle squeeze up against the brass buttons. "Your card says eight o'clock. At eight o'clock, then, I shall be in the hall, and when the entertainment is over, I will join you. Till then farewell, and if for ever, still for ever fare thee well."

"Are you bound for the water to-day?" asked Mr. Vaughan, smiling, as we stopped and shook hands.

Mr. Gammidge turned an imaginary quid, and shook his head.

"Not exactly," he said, with an air of intense thankfulness. "Mine is an amphibious sort of life, you see,

just now—'one foot in sea, and one on shore,' as the Swan says. To-day I'm a landsman. Messmates, *au revoir*."

And so, taking leave of us with this curious confusion of terms, nautical and poetical, Mr. Gammidge cocked his hat very fiercely on one side, sauntered down the High-street after the manner of Mr. T. P. Cooke, and whistled himself out of sight to the tune of "All in the Downs," which he performed with florid variations of a peculiarly unpremeditated and flighty character.

That evening, attired in elaborate full dress, he occupied a central seat in the reserved places, where he particularly distinguished himself by the vehemence of his applause, and by the parliamentary manner in which he delivered himself of audible "bravas" at judicious intervals during the performance.

We were very merry at supper when the concert was over, especially Mr. Gammidge. He told anecdotes of polite life; gave us a humorous representation of the struggles and difficulties of a near-sighted gentleman in search of the salt; extemporized a laughable oration upon the pattern of a supper-plate; volunteered comic songs; insisted on ordering champagne at his own expense; seasoned all his conversation with Shakspearianisms, and made himself, in short, very agreeable, very friendly, and very funny indeed.

The next day, as we were bound for Hastings, he announced his intention of accompanying us; and showed himself, during the two days we remained there, to be a careless, light-hearted, generous fellow enough, very unlike the serious Mr. Gammidge of Drury Lane Theatre. On the second day he engaged a boat, in which, as Romani declined to join us, he took my master, little Alice, and me for a sail round by Beachy-Head. Attired upon this occasion in the trim costume of "the real British sailor," he nearly drowned us all by pulling a wrong rope, and bringing our sail sideways to the wind. Somewhat abashed at the result of this feat, he relinquished the navigation of our bark to the angry boatman, and consoled himself by sucking a small roll of tobacco, which made him

very sick indeed, and caused the little voyage to end less jovially than it began.

Our roads diverged next morning. We turned westward, journeying to Canterbury, and he retraced his steps to Southampton.

"Good-bye, then, till we meet again, a fortnight hence, in Drury Lane," said Mr. Gammidge, speaking in extemporaneous rhyme, and pointing somewhat ruefully to the steamer which was to carry him back. "'My ships are ready, and my people do expect my hence departure.' Mr. Vaughan, sir, good-bye. Romani, addio. Sweet little mistress Alice, your most devoted. Mademoiselle Natalie, I go, and I carry the remembrance of that Collage Hornpipe for ever at my heart. 'Farewell! if ever fondest prayer for other's weal availed on high, mine will not all be lost in——' Gracious powers! there's the bell going! God bless you all. Here, porter! carry my bag to the boat, will you? Here goes for 'the sea, the sea, the open sea—the blue, the fresh, the ever free!' *Sans adieux!*"

How beautiful it is at evening upon the quiet beach, when all is still, and the sun not yet gone down! How exquisitely beautiful it was on that evening of which I speak!

Far to the right of us lay the pier and the busy town, the clustering masts, the stern old castle, and the lines of boats drawn up idly on the shingle. People were merry and all-abroad in Dover, enjoying the cool air that followed the hot day. We could see the dark mass circulating along the parade like a moving army, and every now and then a faint breath of distant music became audible in the profound stillness around us. To our left the great chalk wall reached away to the angle of the South Foreland, and before us stretched the green sea, rocking gently to and fro, and wrapt in a soft, dreamy, melting haze, through which ships far out at sea showed phantom-like. The tide was going down. One by one, as we strolled on so silently, the little waves came gliding up beside our feet, and there

breaking in soft foam, slid back farther and ever farther, and left the wet shore wider every time. Here, in a little shelving hollow, a gleaming pool remained behind—here lay a fragment of old wood, suggestive of shipwrecks, and clustered all over with dark blue mussel-shells. Now a tiny pink and amber shell, a solitary crab imprisoned in a cleft of rock, a coil of brown-green seaweed glutinous to the touch, or a parasite limpet clinging against the face of the rugged chalk wall engaged our passing attention. And still we scarcely spoke, so hushing was the influence of the place.

Now the sunlight faded quite away, and the grey hue spread rapidly. The shrimp-gatherer, out on the little jutting reefs where the tide yet washed, grew black against the background of ocean, and could scarcely be distinguished from the fragments of rock which formed his slippery footing. The faint and far away line of sky and sea became confused. The red light on the Foreland glowed out suddenly upon the dusk, and the answering beacons on the coast of France broke forth one by one, like flushed stars, over the sea. Then the moon rose, and the waves were flecked with silver, and the cry of the wheeling sea-gull sounded strange overhead.

Involuntarily we paused before returning, and looked over the waters. The wandering waves seemed whispering "Home! home!"

"*Mia bella Italia!*" murmured Romani, opening his arms as if he would embrace the shadowy distance.

I sighed heavily.

"And you also," he said, turning an eager face upon me. "And you also, Natalie! We are both strangers in this dark and misty land."

"Both," I echoed, dreamily, thinking of home.

"And we both weary for the sunny lands over the sea."

"Both."

"One wish—one aim—one will!" said the Italian, vehemently. "It is the hand of Destiny!"

I was absorbed in a half-reverie, and listened without quite apprehending the meaning of his words.

"Not by chance alone came we from two such distant lands to meet upon these alien shores. My soul is prophetic, and has long foretold me of you. It is our fate, Natalie. It is our fate!"

He seized my passive hand, and pressed his hot lips to it. They seemed to burn me. I trembled and shrank back.

"It is time to go home, Signor Romani," I said, hurriedly. "See how dark it is getting! Mr. Vaughan will be anxious, and I scarcely noticed how far we had wandered."

He looked at me for a moment in silence, with a strange excited meaning in his glittering eyes. Then he sighed, passed his hand nervously across his brow, and, offering me his arm as before, went homewards without another word.

It was quite dark when we reached our hotel. Mr. Vaughan and the child were sitting by the window watching where the lights from the town were reflected in wavering patches on the black and sullen waters of the harbour. I said that I felt tired, and hurried away to my chamber, where, still trembling, I flung myself upon a couch beside the open casement.

I was confused and terrified. Destiny! Fate! What is this man, that his wild philosophy should have such power over my imagination? I fear, yet I am fascinated!

Woe is me! the very waves sougning fretfully against the pier yonder seem to have changed the burden of their song, and moan—"Fate! Fate!" in melancholy chorus. The rising wind ruffling the sea far away under the moon, takes up the burthen, and bears it past my window.

I am alone, with none to comfort me. Utterly alone, and the stars look down so coldly!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HOME AGAIN.

OVER at last!

For ten weeks we have travelled hither and thither, and the "call" has arrived from the theatre, and the bills say that Madame Malibran, now in Italy, is re-engaged for the spring season. In the meantime Mademoiselle Callot, from Brussels, is to make her *début*. Rehearsals commence, and people say that the season bids fair to be prosperous. But I am still a chorus-singer, and Mr. Gammidge's flattering hint regarding my advancement has borne no fruit.

On the whole I am glad to get back to London, and to the quiet old house by Covent Garden Market—glad to re-commence the happy lessons of every day with my little Alice—glad, above all, to escape the perpetual presence of Romani. Since that evening on the Dover beach, I have endeavoured to avoid him to the utmost of my power. I dread to be for five minutes alone with him, lest he should renew the subject. His hot kiss yet burns my hand, and his ominous words ring upon my ears like the tolling of a funeral bell.

"Not by chance alone came we from two such distant lands to meet upon these alien shores. My soul is prophetic, and has long foretold me of you. It is our fate, Natalie! It is our fate!"

Thinking over this at night, when I am sleepless and all in the house quite still, I feel my courage fail, and struggle vainly to resist the nameless terror by which I am encompassed. True, he has not once renewed the conversation, and shows no anxiety to do so. Perhaps, seeing my evident dismay, he has relinquished all thought of it. Perhaps it was but the passing impulse of the hour, and is already forgotten. Heaven knows! At all events, I resolve to keep as much out of his way as possible. Still I cannot shake off the influence of the ten weeks, do what I will. He has not succeeded in making me a proselyte to pre-existence, double-being, predestination, mesmerism, and the

like—and yet he *has* succeeded in unsettling my former pure and simple faith. My judgment is painfully suspended. I know not what to think—what to doubt—what to believe. All is mystery and anxiety. All I know is, that he has attained a painful ascendancy over me, and that I cannot escape from it!

After two or three days of preparation, the first night is appointed, and the season is to begin in earnest. Of Mr. Gammidge I have seen no more than usual in his theatrical capacity, and, with one exception, have only seen Romani in the orchestra since our return. So far, nothing of moment has occurred during the eight days that I have been in London. On the ninth, a last rehearsal is appointed to take place at two o'clock, previous to the first evening performance. Mademoiselle Callot, who had not hitherto arrived from Belgium, will be present, and from her *début* at night the management, it is said, expects much. The ladies, of course, are dying to criticise the *débutante*, and the gentlemen wonder if she be pretty.

It was a lovely fresh morning for the second week in November. Mr. Vaughan had taken the child round to see the flowers in the market, and I was alone in the solitary house. I felt very nervous and spiritless that day, and set myself resolutely to practise. I had not been singing long when I heard Romani's peculiar knock at the street door. Utterly dismayed, I paused and listened, and knew not what to do. To think how I had escaped him for the last fortnight, and to be caught thus at last! Had I been reading, or working, or writing now . . . had I been doing anything in the world but singing!

The knock was repeated, and I admitted him.

He was very pale. Paler than usual. Coming quickly in, and finding no one but myself, he said, hurriedly—

"Are you alone?"

"For a few minutes," I replied, carelessly. "They are gone to the market for some flowers, and will be back directly."

He had taken a chair, but, hearing this, rose and walked over to the window. Standing there with his

back to me, he remained silent for several seconds, as if in thought.

"I am glad to find you alone," he observed at length, but without changing his position. "I have something to say to you, and I have been waiting many days till the opportunity might offer."

He paused, as if expecting some reply; and then, receiving none, went on.

"I dare say you can guess partly at what I mean. Indeed, I think you have anticipated it! Natalie," here he turned suddenly, and fixed his eyes full upon me, "you have avoided me of late."

I could not help changing colour, but, endeavouring to meet the glance, answered quietly enough—

"I admit it, Signor Romani."

"You have avoided me! You admit it! You detest me then, Natalie?"

"I do not detest you. I have always treated you as a friend."

"I will not have your friendship," cried the Italian, crimsoning with excitement, and speaking very rapidly. "I will have your heart—do you hear me?—Your heart! I love you. Our destinies are alike—our paths in life are one; why not our affections also? Let us go, *carissima*, let us go together—live, love, die together under our own far skies, and leave this gloomy land to colder natures!"

He extended his arms, as if he would embrace me; but I rose hastily.

"Oh no, no," I faltered, scarcely knowing what I said. "I don't love you!"

"You shall love me—you must love me!" he replied, vehemently. "Fate wills it, and no earthly power can part us."

"Indeed," I said, with clasped hands, "indeed, Signor Romani, you mistake me. I cannot love you. I have regarded you as a friend—only as a friend. I never dreamt of this. Pray enter on the subject no more!"

Seeing my emotion, he bit his lip and forced himself to be calm. Then a singular expression came upon his face.

He folded his arms resolutely over his breast, drew himself to his full height, and smiled gravely, as if at his own thoughts.

"As you please, Natalie," he said. "I can be silent; but, nevertheless, *you are mine*. Mine only. Man is the servant of Necessity. The chain by which he is bound can never be sundered, and that chain binds you to me. From the moment of our first meeting I recognised you. I knew you for the one whom I had so long awaited. And you have come at last—you have come at last, my bride!"

I became extremely agitated. There was, as he said this, a wildness in his manner, and a passing glitter in his eye, such as I had never observed before. A strange suspicion struck me—I trembled—I knew not what to do or say, and I shook from head to foot.

When I ventured to look at him again, he was bending calmly over some books upon the table, and the expression which had so startled me was gone.

At this moment Mr. Vaughan returned with the child, and Romani, after lingering for a few minutes, took his leave.

My master was very silent this morning. When we were once more alone he drew his chair before the fire and stared into the embers with that weary expression which I remembered so well, and which I had not seen upon his face since we left London.

"I have been again to the theatre, Natalie," he said at length, "on the old errand, and with the old result. 'Tis the first time I have called for four months."

"And no news of the opera?"

"None!"

"What a long time they take to read it," I observed, scarcely knowing what to say.

My master shook his head moodily.

"I have no interest, Natalie—no interest," he replied. "I have nothing but my genius and my obscurity. And I am an Englishman. That is the unpardonable offence, after all. I may coin my heart into music, starve, beg,

die, go to the dogs—anything you please. It is only just—only reasonable. I deserve it all. I am an Englishman.”

This was spoken bitterly—oh, how bitterly!

He pushed his chair back with a hasty gesture, and paced the room. My poor friend! Neglect and long waiting had already touched his noble nature with impatience.

At two o'clock I attended the rehearsal. Mademoiselle Callot was in the theatre. Though young, interesting, and possessed of a delicious voice, she seemed almost overpowered by nervousness, and could scarcely get through her part, even before an audience composed exclusively of persons belonging to the theatre.

“What will she do when the house is full?” whispered Mrs. M’Gillivray, with a chuckle of anticipation.

“Break down, of course,” said Miss Miles, complacently. “She Amelia, indeed! A pretty Amelia for the first night of the season!”

“Hasn’t a steady note in her voice,” observed another.

“Takes breath in wrong places!” cried a fourth.

“And is nothing to look at, I’m sure!” adds a fifth.

Poor little timid foreigner! My heart ached for her. Ominous looks and whispers, all tending to the same purpose, met me on every side as I left the theatre; and just by the outer door I passed our stage-manager deep in conversation with Mr. Gammidge. Both looked grave.

“Bet you five shillings that we have a dead failure to-night,” said the former.

“By Jove! I’m afraid so,” replied the chorus-master with a dismal whistle. “Dead as Julius Cæsar!”

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE DÉBUTANTE.

EVENING came. It wanted about twenty minutes to the hour at which the doors must be opened. Two or three musicians were in the orchestra, and some few of the singers and chorus-singers were loitering about the stage. An unsettled anxious expression pervaded every face, and people conversed in whispers. There was evidently something wrong. I could see that at a glance, so I lingered there myself for a few moments, wondering what it could be, and listening to the subdued murmur of the crowd outside the doors. Thus more came, and, each following the other's example, paused, and questioned, and added to the number, and still no one knew exactly what it was all about.

Then there was a sudden murmur, and then a lull; and then the manager and Mr. Gammidge came up together. All there looked troubled, and the manager was very pale.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "and I address myself especially to the ladies—you see me in great perplexity. Mademoiselle Callot, at the eleventh hour, declines to make her appearance this evening. I have no time to send over London in search of a substitute. The folks outside are already battering the doors. Is there any lady here who would undertake the part for me to-night?"

"I'm sure I shall be delighted!" exclaimed that shrill voice which was the exclusive property of Miss Miles.

"You! Pshaw, woman, not you! Here, *impressario*, here stands the singer for whom you ask! By heaven, Natalie, you shall come forward!"

It was Romani, flushed and trembling with excitement, who had sprung up from the orchestra, and was now dragging me forward by both hands.

The manager looked puzzled and uneasy.

"Does the lady feel herself competent to read the part at sight?" he asked.

"I am intimate with every note of the music," I replied. "It would not be necessary for me to read any portion of it."

"And I," said Mr. Gammidge, stepping forward, "am rejoiced to offer my testimony to the professional ability of Mademoiselle Metz. The public will lose nothing by the change."

A glance of satisfaction crossed the manager's anxious face; but it was evident that he still doubted.

"Be it so, then," he said, hurriedly. "May I trouble you, Madam, to step into Mademoiselle Callot's dressing-room, where you will find all that you may require—and now, if you please, we have no time to spare. Here, Jackson, down with the green curtain! It's time the doors were opened."

And so, trembling and pale, I hasten away to the prima donna's apartment, and consign myself to the hands of a dresser, leaving Miss Miles speechless with indignation.

The opera was "Gustavus." A whole act elapses before the heroine appears, and I had all this time to prepare myself. Once dressed I began to gain confidence. The moment was come at last when I must make or mar my fortune. I resolved to make it.

The curtain rose. I became strangely excited, but with a kind of wild delight that was half desperation. My heart beat high—my cheeks flushed—my breast seemed to dilate, and my voice to strengthen within me.

The first act passed away with moderate applause. An apology always damps an audience, and the intimation of Mademoiselle Callot's "sudden indisposition" had already gone far to injure the first night of the season. As the curtain fell, Romani and Mr. Vaughan came round and waited for me at the wings.

The second act commenced; and it was now my turn to appear as Amelia, the wife of the courtier Akarstrom, who seeks the abode of a prophetess in order to purchase from

her a philter which may quench her unhappy attachment for Gustavus.

"Amelia, you're called," said the call-boy, shrilly.

I came out of my dressing-room, and, catching a glimpse of my face in a mirror as I passed, scarcely recognised the flashing eyes and triumphant lip for my own.

"Natalie!" said Romani, laying his hand upon my arm, "you *must* win this game to-night."

But I shook the hand off without a word, and went on.

No sooner had I appeared in the far gloom of the seer's den than I was greeted by a round of encouraging applause. I advanced a little way and bowed, and it was repeated. I trembled, but not with fear. The footlights blinded me, and seemed to interpose a curtain of light between the audience and myself. I could not see an inch beyond the stage; and it was fortunate for me that I was so dazzled, as the sight of the audience might, perhaps, have unnerved me. Now I assumed the trembling tone and shrinking attitude of the high-born lady who has ventured into the fortune-teller's murky abode. I implored her aid, and my changing countenance expressed alternate terror, despair, and love. Now the prophetess declares that I must seek that dreadful spot beyond the city walls where stands the ancient scaffold, and that I must there gather a certain mystic herb peculiar to the site. I dread, I waver, I consent. The crowd rushes in, and I fly from the scene.

There was another round of applause; but the chorus began instantly, and my share in that act was concluded.

Another brief pause, and the curtain rose again. It was a solemn scene, and marvellously painted: a black desert heath near Stockholm, treeless and houseless. Two mossy columns, united at the top by an iron bar, rise darkly in the midst of the stage. These form the gibbet, and the ghastly chains yet hang from them in which criminals are suspended. I came slowly forward to seek, in that terrible solitude, the plant whose virtue was oblivion. The scene, the situation, the music, all inspired me with a strange feeling of reality, and having wrought myself to that be-

lief, I forgot even how my own fortunes were dependent on my success, and remembered only Amelia and Gustavus.

The house is profoundly silent, and, in the opening recitative, the first notes of my voice, imploring courage from heaven, seem to wander tremblingly round the space, and then to die away in grief and terror. I advance, recede, advance again, and stoop to pluck the fatal leaves from the foot of the nearest column. The far off clocks tell the hour of midnight. I cannot pluck the herb, for, oh! I love him!—Yet, great heaven! guide and strengthen me! I *will* gather it. I turn again, and see—the king!

Then that passionate scene of love and doubt—that struggle of honour, friendship, fidelity, and wildest emotion, on which the curtain falls!

And now a long roar of approbation from the house. I am led forward, I scarcely know by whom. Bouquets fall around me. The dazzling effect of the lights has worn away, and I see a vast crowd of upturned faces, many of which are in tears.

And then they are all waiting for me at the side, the manager, and Mr. Gammidge, and Romani, and my master, and Kate Foster, and many others.

"I congratulate you, Mademoiselle," says the manager, shaking me heartily by the hand. "I have never known a more successful *début*."

"Under such bad auspices, too, by Jove!" adds the friendly chorus-master, beaming all over with delight.

"Natalie, Natalie—my daughter!" murmurs Mr. Vaughan, passing his arm tenderly round my waist and supporting me back to the dressing-room, where I sink, faint and fluttered, into a chair, and signal dumbly for "water!"

And Romani? He stalks impatiently to and fro along the corridor, approaching me from time to time with a sort of wild triumph in his eyes, and lips firmly pressed together, as if he dared not trust himself to speak. My emotion, however, appears to annoy him, for coming up to me presently, he snatches the glass from my hand, and

"Tush! reuse yourself, Natalie! Get up, and dress for the next scene! Have you no energy?"

Energy! That word is enough. I rise at once, and hasten to prepare for the last act. Then comes the call—the ball-room scene, with its myriads of lamps and rich costumes—the giddy galop—the terrible incident of warning, assassination, death! And so the opera progresses to its climax, with the same success, the same passion and power, and the same intense reality. Having abandoned myself utterly to the part, I have no need of studied gesture or stage artifice. My terror and my tears are alike real, and when the curtain falls for the last time, I am hot and cold, trembling and feverish, and scarcely sensible of what is passing around me.

"You must go forward, Mademoiselle," says the manager. "Just listen to them!"

The applause is tremendous, and mingled with it—yes, surely! mingled with it the cry for "Amelia! Amelia!"

And so, supported on either side, I am led forward again, and not only once, but again after that. More bouquets, more applause, more intoxication of triumph! A laurel wreath is thrown upon the stage, and is placed by the manager on my brow!

Can it be real, or am I only dreaming all this time?

CHAPTER XXX.

UNDER THE SHADE OF THE UPAS.

FROM this moment all was changed. It was no longer poverty, but independence. Not alone independence, but luxury.

The second night put the reality of my success beyond a doubt, and the manager himself acknowledged that I had achieved more than had ever been anticipated by even the warmest partisans of the lady whose place I had taken. Mademoiselle Callot, accordingly, returned to

Brussels without making her appearance, and I was engaged at a salary of sixty pounds a week to fill all the first soprano rôles up to the period of Madame Malibran's arrival. It was now the beginning of November, and the great vocalist was to appear in May. For five months my present salary was secure. For five months I had pledged myself to appear six nights in every week, and to undertake many parts with which I was as yet utterly unfamiliar. At first, I confess, I was startled by the magnitude of the undertaking. Doubtful, almost, if my powers were equal to the task. That feeling wore off, however, when a day or two had gone by, and I became in a manner familiarized with my position as prima donna of Drury Lane Theatre.

And now I should have been very happy in the happiness which I was enabled to diffuse around me, but for the insupportable presence of Romani. Fitful was he, and various in his moods, sometimes covering my hands with passionate kisses, and heaping upon me those terms of exquisite endearment in which the soft Southern tongue is so voluptuously rich—sometimes scorning me for my attempted resistance to what he called "the ordinance of Fate"—sometimes impetuous, impatient, overbearing, vowing that I should be his, and his only, no matter the consequences! There were times when a steady gaze from those flaming eyes was alone sufficient to strike me into silence—to chill my blood, and stop the beating of my heart.

One morning (how well I remember it!) he came suddenly into the room when I was alone. He had a white rose in his hand, although it was now far advanced into November.

"See, Natalie," he said, bending over me—"see, here is a rose for you—a rose in winter-time. A rose like my love, which blooms summer-like and warmly amid this dark and chilling English sky. I will place it in your hair, *mia bella!*"

I started back. That morning his touch and presence were loathsome to me.

"I will not have it," I said, hastily. "Neither the rose nor your love, Signor Romani! Why do you persecute me so?"

He paused, laid the flower on the table, and looked at me.

"You are angry with me this morning," he said, very calmly,

"I am desperate," I replied, rising and pacing to and fro about the room. "I am desperate. You make me so, and you know it. Why will you not take a refusal? I have told you over and over again that I do not love you—that I never can love you. Any other would be content with this. Any other would withdraw attentions which he knew to be unwelcome. Why will you not do the same, Signor Romani? What pleasure can it be to you to force your presence upon me? If you would come merely as a friend you should be always welcome; but as a lover—no!"

He stood quite still all this time, with his head bent, and his eyes fixed upon the ground.

"And what if I am determined to come as a lover!" he asked, in the same suppressed voice, and without changing his attitude.

"Then, sir, you will compel me to take a step which hitherto, through a natural reluctance, I have avoided. I must speak to Mr. Vaughan, and he will forbid you the house."

"But he cannot forbid me the theatre. We must meet there."

I had forgotten this in the heat of my indignation. He saw my look of vexed dismay, and burst into a wild, discordant laugh.

"Aha!" said he, "and you thought to baffle me so, did you, my fair *donzella*? But I am too resolute for you. Love, Natalie, love is stronger than hate! Love is more wily. Love is more active. Love will not be shut out by bolts and bars! Do you know," and here he dropped his voice to a whisper, "do you know, Natalie, that at first, before I came to know you very well, I took you for a spirit."

"A spirit!" I echoed, recoiling suddenly.

"Yes—one of those that come and go sometimes of a night when I am alone. I often see them."

Again that expression which had once before alarmed me. I shuddered, and could with difficulty support myself.

"They come chiefly when I am playing, and I thought you were one of these. I expected, often and often, to see you vanish as they vanish; but no, you stayed, and I loved you. Yes, yes, I loved you—I love you now. There are not many who can love so wildly and so well!"

He tossed his arms above his head as he said this, and traversed the room twice or thrice with rapid strides. Then he flung himself upon the sofa, and buried his face in his hands. He remained thus for a long time, and I (too much alarmed to stir or speak) stood in the one spot looking at him.

We remained thus for a long time. Then he lifted up his head, came over to me suddenly, and said, gazing at me very earnestly, but without the slightest trace of the expression that I so dreaded—

"Natalie, you see how I love you. I believe, if you continue to treat me as you have lately treated me, I shall go mad."

So saying, he seized his hat abruptly and left the room. No further allusion was ever made to this conversation, but henceforth, when he spoke openly of his love, or treated me before people as his betrothed bride, I submitted in silence and terror. It would be impossible to describe the fear with which he inspired me. I lived under the influence of what seemed to be a horrible nightmare; and had I not been so intensely occupied—had not my mind been so constantly employed in the study and rehearsal of parts, I know not what I should have done. As it was I was perpetually devising plans by which to rid myself of him, and as often rejected them as impracticable.

I could not accuse him of insanity. I would not have been so cruel for the world; besides, I honestly believed that his brain was only touched in a slight degree from

excitement and over-study, combined with a constitutional tendency towards superstition. Sometimes I thought I would escape to Italy or Germany, and there pursue my professional studies for a few years longer, till he should cease to care for or remember me. But these were only wild schemes, after all, and I had no adviser to help me. So I waited till some favourable moment should occur, and in the mean time fretted and wore myself away with anxiety.

It was a miserable life. No one knew how I suffered, for I endured in silence. I grew thin and pale, however; but the late hours and the close study accounted for that; and they said in the theatre that Mademoiselle Natalie was consumptive.

CHAPTER XXXI.

GIBLETS.

GIBLETS!

The oddity of the name first attracted my attention. I don't suppose I should have remarked him but for that. They called him so in allusion to his deformity, poor fellow; but the word had almost lost its primitive meaning now, and he would have known himself by no other. He was Mr. Gilbert once; but that was before he had the fall.

Half-witted, deformed, begrimed with dirt, and clothed in such incongruous rags as were occasionally thrown out from the wardrobe of the establishment, he slunk and crouched about the gloom of the place, and seemed to harbour in and belong to it like one of the spiders. And he looked, somehow, like a spider. Shrunken in body, knotted, twisted, and huge of limb, he seemed as if he could crawl up a wall or across a ceiling as naturally as any of them—and so he did many years ago, with certain aids and appliances; but that was before he had the fall.

Do you remember how he played goblin characters,

gnome-flies, bottle-imps, wood-dæmons, and the like? Well, this is he. You can teach him nothing now, save a name and address, or some brief message, and that only with patience and difficulty. His brains (cloudy at the best of times) were shaken by that fall into an inextricable confusion, from which they have never since recovered. His memory is gone. Nothing but a sort of odd, fitful cunning, a dogged adherence to the task in hand, a sullen thankfulness for employment, and a snarling, smouldering, apish wrath when aggravated, remains of the shattered intellect.

Useful even now, however, Giblets yet clung to the theatre, and lived by such fragmentary wits as he had left. He was a sort of humble messenger, assistant scene-shifter, nail-driver, porter, sweep, and general drudge. He carried little pink three-cornered notes to and fro between the ballet-ladies and their fashionable acquaintances in the neighbourhood of Pall Mall. He fetched surreptitious porter for the orchestra, and blacked the boots of the chorus for "Don Pasquale." He was one of the rebels in "Massaniello," and in the Christmas pantomimes became the willing victim of inconvenient fireworks. Besides these and many other duties, he attended occasionally to the thunder, dragged heavy weights to represent carriages behind the scenes, and knocked long double knocks at the wings for impatient visitors in farces.

There was some dark hole under some dark staircase where he burrowed of a night, after the lights were out and the place was quite deserted. No one knew where it was, and no one ever saw him go to or come from it. It was his secret, and not even Flukes, the night watcher, had succeeded in penetrating it. As he slept at night so he lived by day. He was never seen to eat a meal. When they gave him victuals he carried them away as soon as the giver's back was turned, and ate them in his den, like a dog. He would drink greedily, though, whatever came in his way—from the sparkling toast-water provided for the orgies of "Don Giovanni," down to the veritable beer or spirits which occasionally fell in his way.

I saw a little scene one day *apropos* of this weakness on his part, which made somewhat of an impression upon me, and led me to conclude that he might possibly be neither the safest or pleasantest individual in the world upon whom to play off any of those friendly attentions known as practical jokes.

There had been a rehearsal, and I was going to the treasury at the time, thinking of many things, and not in the least of Giblets. The passage was gloomy and narrow, with a good many doors and staircases branching off of it, and a window at the end. Suddenly something interposed between me and the light. I heard a confused, gnashing, inarticulate noise, a burst of distant laughter, and a sound as of some unwieldy object tumbling along the passage towards me.

"Damn you all!" gasped a hoarse voice, which I recognised at once. "Damn you all! Wish you were dead! Wish you were burnt! Wish you were hanged! Yah!"

I shrank back against the wall and held my breath, for there was something terrible in his impish rage.

A man made his appearance at the end of the corridor, laughing and holding his sides.

"Hollo, Caliban!" he cried. "Where are you? Take another pull, Jocko! Hi, Jocko! Jocko!"

Giblets replied by a suppressed yell, made a spring at a projecting beam close by, and swung himself over to an upper staircase. Here a gleam of blue daylight fell upon his face. It was livid and hideous with passion, and, as he stood waving his long arms above his head and chattering to himself, he looked at the same time hideous and grotesque, like the beaked demon in *Der Schelmen zunft*.

He stayed there for some few moments till the other went away, and then, still threatening, shambled upstairs and passed out of sight.

When he was quite gone I ventured forth, but the episode was not agreeable, and I never forgot it. Up to this time I had compassionated Giblets, and often passed him by almost without being aware of it. Now I felt a

sort of shrinking which it was impossible wholly to suppress, and, when he was present, avoided him.

Whether it was that I observed him more, or that he really hovered more about our part of the theatre I scarcely knew or considered at first, but somehow Giblets came perpetually across my path not long after this event. I never opened the door of my dressing-room but I saw him somewhere near. I never entered the stage-door but he seemed to be lurking by, waiting for me. I never left the theatre by day or night but I caught glimpses of him either in the street, or behind the pillars of the front entrance, or among the wheels of the carriages. When I was acting he lingered at the wings, or stared down at me from some giddy perch up in the flies, and if I spoke but a word to any person whatever, he slunk round and round behind scenes and piles of lumber till he worked his way near enough to listen. The thing became intolerable at last, and filled me with an uneasiness of which (Heaven knows!) I at that time had no need.

Entering the theatre with Kate Foster late one evening, feeling moreover very nervous and weary, and yearning to tell something of my many troubles, I spoke to her of this new annoyance.

"I cannot imagine, dear," I added, "that I am the subject of anything so romantic as a planned system of espial, but I am convinced he follows me everywhere. When I cannot see him, I feel his eyes upon me. Don't laugh at me, Kate, for indeed it is so."

"I never felt less disposed to laugh," said Kate, very gravely. "I had observed it myself, but I did not care to tell it to you. You look anxious enough already."

"Observed it, did you say? Can you—can you form any conjecture?"

"Not the slightest; unless, indeed," and here she smiled sadly, "Caliban be in love with Miranda again."

I laughed and shuddered at the same time, and laid my hand reproachfully over her mouth. We were now standing by the door of my dressing-room. At this moment a rustling close by caused me to turn quickly, and I saw a

dark shadow glide away among some planks and rollers lying up against the wall.

"It is he!" I said, and my heart beat fast.

Kate laughed, or tried to laugh, and, opening the door, pushed me gently in before her.

"Miranda! Miranda!" she said, gaily, "I fear some handsome Ferdinand has been in the way, for you do not seem at all flattered by the attentions of your long-armed admirer! Really it would appear that Giblets . . . Eh! what's this? A love-letter?"

She had taken a folded paper from the table and was examining it half-laughingly, half-curiously, by the light of the candle.

"A droll handwriting," she said, passing it to me. "And not particularly clean outside! Dearest Natalie, this is something poetical, you may depend!"

Something poetical, indeed, written upon foolscap, fastened with a red wafer, and directed to "miss N. metz!" The wafer had been pressed with a thimble, and the whole thing was soiled and tumbled. Greatly surprised, I opened it, and read these words:

"One as knows you and your doings can give you infirmation of friburge, and wants money. Send ten pound to X, at the Post Offiss No — Greys in road, and you shall know moor. send the cash at once or it'll be wurse for you and make an enemy of one who'd willing be a friend."

Fribourg! I sank upon a chair and the note dropped from my hands.

"Heavens, how pale you are!" cried Kate. "What is the matter? What is it about?"

I could only point to the open paper lying on the floor. She read it at a glance, and, when she had done, turned to me hastily, and said,—

"Though I am but imperfectly acquainted with the circumstances of your life at Fribourg, I see that this thing is startling and strange. Who can have written it?"

"I can form no idea."

"Surely not—not Giblets?"

The suggestion was so absurd that, as she said it, she could not suppress a smile.

"Oh, impossible!"

"And yet he was there as we came up."

Our eyes met. The same suspicion occurred at the same moment to both, and I opened the door hastily.

All was quite still. The corridor was empty, and not a soul in sight.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A PROJECT FULFILLED.

It was my darling project. It had been my darling project ever since my début; but I had not breathed a word of it to a soul,—except to Mr. Gammidge. Mr. Gammidge was my confidant. Mr. Gammidge was my assistant. In fact, I may say that Mr. Gammidge and I undertook it together, fought its battle together, carried it through triumphantly, and rejoiced together when the victory was accomplished.

"Mademoiselle Metz," said that gentleman, as we came from the manager's room on the eventful morning—(Mr. Gammidge, by the way, was carrying It reverentially under his arm)—"Mademoiselle Metz, I think we may fairly congratulate ourselves; for, as the Swan says, we 'with pain have wooed and won thereto!' 'Pon my soul, now, I am glad. By the bones of my grandfather, I am very glad!"

"You are, at all events, most kind and unwearied," I answered, gratefully. "I wish it were in my power to do anything for you. Is there no way, Mr. Gammidge?"

We were by this time arrived at the door of the little sentry-box usually occupied by the pale young clerk who had asked me to write my name in the book when I first
to the theatre the season before. The sentry-box

was empty, and the clerk gone to his dinner. Mr. Gammidge walked in, laid *It* respectfully upon the desk, ran his fingers through his hair till it stood bolt upright, and coughed bashfully.

"Well now, Miss—Miss Natalie," he hesitated, "there is, perhaps—I mean to say there might be—if quite agreeable to you, you know, and to—to every other party—that is, if the other party . . . Oh, hang it! I—I can't say what I mean anyhow!"

And Mr. Gammidge rubbed his hat all round the wrong way with the sleeve of his coat, till it bristled up like his hair, and seemed to partake of his own agitation.

"Pray go on," I said, earnestly. "You don't know how glad it would make me to oblige you in any way."

"You are very good and very amiable, Miss Natalie. By the bones of my grandfather, you are! I am—I mean the—the party to whom—and I'm sure I wouldn't for the world—the fact is, I cannot better express myself than in the language of the immortal Swan, who says—What the deuce did the Swan say upon that subject?"

"Really, Mr. Gammidge," I replied, smiling, "I cannot assist you till I know what the subject is!"

"Then, Mademoiselle, I—I beg your pardon for delaying you, and I'll take some other opportunity of explaining my sentiments. I've made a fool of myself this morning. You see, I'm a—a little nervous and—and out of sorts. I'll take another opportunity (hang the glove!) and—and (I'm an idiot, by jingo!) I'll call—or write—or—Really I beg your pardon! Good morning!"

Here he discovered that he had been trying to put both gloves on one hand, and so got very red, pulled the excited-looking hat well over his eyes, made me a hurried bow, and dived back into the theatre with *It* under his arm.

Happy as I was, I could not help thinking of this as I hurried home, and was both amused and puzzled by it.

Mr. Vaughan was sitting by the fire reading when I entered, and Alice was bending her fair little head busily over her German exercise.

I went and laid my hand lightly on his shoulder.

"My dear master," I said, "look up at me!"

He looked up, and seeing that unwonted brightness on my face, knew instantly that there was something.

"What is it?" he said, hastily. "What is it? Have you heard from Switzerland?"

I shook my head.

"Seen any of them, then? Which is it, Laurent or Louis?"

"Neither."

"Pshaw! why don't you tell me? Have they raised your salary?"

"Better than that—much better than that, my dear, kind master. The manager"—here I smiled and hesitated—"the manager has—Can't you guess?"

He flushed crimson, then turned very pale, and shook his head; but little Alice clapped her hands and leaped up, crying—"Oh! I can guess! I can guess! I know, papa! He will buy the opera! Isn't that it, Natalie, darling? Isn't it the opera?"

"Alice is right," I said, with an odd sort of choking in my throat. "Kiss papa, darling, and make him believe it."

He rose up, sat down again, folded the child in his arms, and could not speak a word. When he lifted up his face again there was a tear on his cheek, but he brushed it hastily away and came to where I was standing, pretending to look out of the window.

"Natalie," he said, "this is your work. Don't attempt to deny it, for I know it is your work. I thought to make your future, my child, and you have made mine. God bless you, dear!"

And, for the first time since we had known each other, since we had been one family and shared one home, Mr. Vaughan drew me gently to his side and kissed me, like a father, on the brow.

Oh, I was very happy for that one day—very happy!

In less than a fortnight the parts were given out, and by the beginning of March it was in rehearsal. The rôle of Ildegonda was offered to me, but I knew that he had

written it for Malibran, and a little diplomacy sufficed to transfer it to her. So they forwarded it to her abroad, and she engaged to make her *début* in it on the first of May. Mr. Vaughan was to lead the orchestra. He was quite another man now, and I—ah, well! I tried to be happy also!

As to the anonymous letter, I thought it best to consult my master on the subject. He counselled me to write briefly and civilly to X at the address given, stating that any communication of a more open and satisfactory character would meet with my utmost attention—that I could not think of sending money upon so imperative a summons and so vague an inducement; but that I might be seen at any time appointed, and should feel obliged by a personal interview. To this letter I received no reply, and the thing passed by and was forgotten.

Not so, however, the unpleasant surveillance of Giblets. He haunted me like my shadow, or my evil genius, and, avoid him as I would, I could not shake him off.

It was about this time—the middle, I think, of March—that an odd thing happened. At least it seemed odd to me, for I was nervous and harassed, and filled with doubts of every kind. Romani, as I have already said, treated me publicly as his betrothed, and escorted me to and from the theatre every night. On this particular evening Romani had been detained in the orchestra, and, my part being over early, I was ready to go home before him. I was glad of the respite, and had no fear to go alone, unless, indeed, Giblets should take it into his head to dog my steps.

Fearful of this contingency I peeped into the corridor before I would venture from my dressing-room, and seeing no one there, darted out as swiftly and silently as I could. The corridor opened on the stage, and I threaded the wings in terror, expecting to meet him every moment. Still I was fortunate, and having reached the stage-door in safety, thought all the danger past. Coming out, however, and crossing along under the grand entrance, where a long line of empty carriages was drawn up awaiting the

close of the performance, I saw the outline of a dark form crouched behind a sentry-box, and knew at once that it was he.

But not alone this time!

Stopping involuntarily, and gazing steadily into the gloom, I plainly saw two figures, Giblets and another. The other was a woman. They were conversing in whispers, with their faces turned towards me.

I felt myself inspired all at once with a desperate courage. What had I to fear? Why not go up and address them?

Trembling, agitated, and yet undaunted, I made my mind up to it, and suddenly approached them. The woman turned instantly away, and darted down the nearest street. Giblets, startled and confused, receded a step or two, and then stood still.

I came up face to face with him, and looked steadily into his eyes.

"Why do you watch me?" I said, with quivering lips. "Why do you follow me about, day and night, like a spy?"

His lips moved without uttering a sound, and he stared at me.

"What woman was that?"

Still the same terrified stare, but no reply.

"Tell me at once who she is. I insist upon knowing!"

He shook his head, still staring at me, and crept along the wall by his hands, like a drunken man, farther and farther away. Then, with a wild, wailing cry, sprang down the broad steps at a single leap, and was out of sight in a moment.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE FIRST NIGHT.

THE first night was fixed for the first of May. Malibran was expected in town on the thirtieth of April, and a dress-rehearsal was appointed for the morning of the eventful day. As the time approached, I grew more nervous and excited than ever; but Mr. Vaughan seemed, precisely in the inverse ratio, to gain confidence and self-possession. The first of May came at last. In the morning he was gay and collected.

"I have no fears," he said at lunch, nodding to me over his glass of wine. "Malibran arrived yesterday at her hotel—the band and chorus are perfect. Nothing is wanted now but this last rehearsal with herself in the concerted pieces, and then all is safe. Oh, Natalie, I feel that it will be a success!"

The rehearsal began about two. At five he came home, pale and agitated, and all his hopes dispersed.

"Natalie! Natalie!" he said, pacing to and fro about the room, "she was not there! Good God!—the idea of performing in a new opera without a rehearsal!"

"Not there!"

"See! here's her letter. 'Overpowered with fatigue—protracted sea-passage.' Pshaw! the excuses of a prima donna!"

"Still her genius—"

"Her genius cannot, will not carry her through an unrehearsed performance. Everything is ruined, Natalie! Everything is ruined!" Nothing more could be said to this. My heart sank within me, and I saw him leave his untasted dinner on the table, and hasten away again, without the power to offer him any consolation.

As the hour drew near, I took the child with me, and went to the theatre. They gave me a box just at the bend of the house, commanding a full view both of the audience and the stage. Every seat was crowded, from

the pit to the gallery, and in every spare inch of room there were people standing. Romani was in the orchestra. He looked moody and disconcerted, and more than once glanced towards me and shook his head.

Presently my master came in and took his place, with the little white baton in his hand. The musicians applauded, and a faint welcome was echoed here and there from the house. The audience had assembled for Malibran—not for Mr. Vaughan or his opera; but Alice clapped her little hands joyfully, and said, “Look! look, Natalie! There is papa!”

Having acknowledged his reception with quiet courtesy and prepared the music before him, he stood, as it were, absorbed in thought. How noble he looked, dressed all in black, with those loose, thick locks of iron-grey falling nearly to his shoulders, and those deep, thoughtful eyes bent earnestly on the ground! Surely the power of that man’s will and genius must prevail to-night!

Now the signal is given—he looks round, and lifts the baton slowly. As he lifts it, a quiet stream of melody seems to flow from the violins and basses—a stream which swells and gathers strength in its flowing, embracing many tributaries as it goes, and rising presently to the full power of the orchestra. Now, in obedience apparently to the light repeated motion of his hand, a rippling air starts up, flute-like, and dances on the stream of under-sound, like a rose-leaf on the tide. There is no need to tell us that this delicious opening represents the waters of the Rhine, on whose banks the story of the opera is laid. All is liquid, sparkling, and yet broadly majestic, like the King-river itself. Soon a graver passage follows, and is succeeded by an *agitato* movement full of strife and hurry, interrupted by the roll of the drum and the clash of the cymbals, and rent by wailing upper-notes, like the cries from a breaking heart. Then comes a lull—an interval of deep calm—and then the rich solemn tones of an organ behind the stage, pealing forth a solemn chorale! A glorious overture—a poem set to music—a prologue to all the story that follows after it! When the chorale dies away,

the orchestra comes back again, rolling like a tide, and the composition works grandly to a close. Then there are two hearty rounds of applause. Mr. Vaughan turns and bows—the bell rings, and the curtain rises.

The scene represents a banquetting-hall in the castle of Liebenstein, with glimpses of scenery through the open windows. There is a chorus of huntsmen—a duet for baritone and bass—and an unaccompanied tenor solo. So far all is well, but now—now, attended by her hand-maidens, Malibran enters the scene. Her appearance is followed by a roar of welcome from every part of the house. The pit rises. The ladies wave their handkerchiefs; and, in the midst of it, I see my master draw a deep breath, and pass his hand nervously across his brow. A duet and then a trio will follow next, and if she fail not in these, she will succeed in all. There is a hush of suspense, during which I can hear the apprehensive beatings of my own heart; but, from the moment they begin, my fears are gone! Like two instruments under the command of a single player, their voices flow together, diverge, re-unite, and thread all the gradations of sweet sound. Then the third singer chimes in; and all this time she never hesitates for a note—never wavers—never even looks a doubt. Conscious of her own power, she is fearless, and, because she is fearless, is triumphant. This trio is tumultuously encored. Mr. Vaughan shakes his hair back from his forehead with a sigh of relief, and the songstress, as she comes forward for the second time, gives him a merry, mocking glance, and a bright smile which says plainly, "Well! are your terrors at an end?"

They are at an end, and from this moment every concerted piece, every chorus, every song is a fresh success. Malibran is called at the close of the first act, and again at the close of the second.

"Why don't they call papa?" says Alice, pettishly. "Wont they call him too, Natalie?"

And so I soothe her, and say they will be sure to do so when it is all over—and then the third act begins.

We all know the beautiful old legend of the Lieben-

stein. We all know the story of the gentle Geraldine, who was beloved by two brothers, sons to the great Baron who dwelt in the castle of Liebenstein. She rejected the elder knight, who was tender and true, and betrothed herself to the younger, who was rash and light of love, and went away to the wars in Palestine before they could be married. Then the Baron built a castle near at hand, upon the rock of the Sternenfels, and prepared it with great splendour for the younger knight and the gentle Geraldine; and so many years went by, and he returned at last with another love, a Greek wife, wicked and beautiful, and Geraldine in her sorrow became a holy nun. But the elder knight, who had never ceased to love her, was wrath against his fickle brother, and challenged him to mortal combat in the valley of Bornhofen. And then, when their swords were drawn, the lady Geraldine came down from her convent on the hill, robed in white, like an angel, and bade them cease and be friends, for she was now the bride only of heaven. And they were friends; but the Greek wife was false, and left the Lord of Sternenfels for another knight, and so punished him for his own infidelity. And thus the legend endeth.

Not thus, however, the opera. Librettists are privileged to take liberties with graver histories than old Rhine legends, and this librettist had thought fit to let the elder brother fall by the hand of the younger before the lady could interpose between them. It ended the opera more effectively, but it spoilt the legend. In this scene my master had accumulated all the strength of his genius. It opens with a chorus of male voices. Then the brothers meet face to face, each at the head of his own followers. Then commences the combat, and in the midst of it the convent-bells ring, and the organ plays, and the nuns far away chant that lovely prayer which was first heard in the overture. Nearer the voices draw, and nearer, and still the unnatural fight goes on, and when the lady comes, the generous, the faithful, the knightly lover is dying.

I shall never forget that scene. Though the delicious

voice that doubled every charm in that glorious music has been hushed for so many years—though more than twenty have gone by, reader, since that night, every note, every throb, every cadence of it is still ringing in my ears. Listening to her singing I forgot that I was myself a singer. Seeing her act I no longer remembered that I was an actress. My tears flowed at her command as freely as those of the least initiated in all that theatre.

If I felt thus, it was no wonder that the audience cheered her so madly, and summoned her back, and back, and back again, when it was over. Then they called for the composer.

He had left the orchestra immediately after the curtain fell, and refused at first to obey the call. The cries swelled to a tempest. The composer!—the composer! They would have him! And then he pulled the curtain aside with his own strong hand—advanced nearly to the middle of the stage—bowed profoundly thrice over, and——

I did not see him retire. I looked at the house instead, and my face flushed with triumph. Looked at the eager faces lighting it all over—at the busy hands applauding in every part—at the one expression beaming alike from the eyes of the nobleman in his box and from those of the mechanic in the gallery.

The gallery! Gracious powers—the gallery!

There, there, looking straight down at me with that evil, evil smile, and those cruel eyes, I see a dreaded, an unforgotten face—the face of Mrs. Jones!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MR. GAMMIDGE'S SECRET.

THERE were two letters lying on my breakfast-table.

I should observe, by the way, that matters were very different with us now in the old dark house near the market. Everything had been done to make it look brighter. We kept two female servants, and I had a little drawing-room, which Mr. Vaughan called my boudoir, and which was all my own. It was a pretty room, decorated with pictures, and flowers, and such little ornaments as I fancied, and here I studied my parts, received my visitors, and, because I was late at night and weary by day, breakfasted alone some two hours after the rest.

I was more than usually late this fair summer's morning. I was now playing on the alternate nights, and my vases were all filled with last evening's bouquets. As I have said, there were two letters awaiting me. One was addressed in a small foreign hand, entirely unfamiliar to me. The other was written on pink paper, folded fancifully in the shape of an angular mathematical-looking heart, and directed in a flourishing hand, which I seemed to have seen somewhere or another, but could not recognise. I opened it, and found that my pink correspondent was Mr. Gammidge.

“Respected Mademoiselle

· Having been so amiable as to say the other day that you wished you could find some means of obliging me which I was too deeply agitated at the time to find words for a reply suitable to the occasion I now write to say that I have never since that auspicious moment ceased to reflect with grateful rapture on your inspiring words and am now desirous of making you the recipient of my sentiments. I have a cherished secret respected Mademoiselle and it may be a bliss or it may be a bane to me but which of the two is not at present in my power to say and can-

not be decided till as the immortal Swan has somewhere said I can obtain 'intelligence and proofs as clear as founts in July.' Hoping that under consideration of the circumstances you will allow me to call and that two o'clock this day will not be inconvenient I have the honour to inform you that there is a call for rehearsal to-morrow morning at the usual time and remain your very obedient servant entirely to command

"HIPPOLITUS GAMMIDGE."

This incoherent note, so economical of punctuation and so prodigal of sentiment, both amused and troubled me. After reading it twice over I dispatched a reply to the theatre, in which I said that I should be happy to receive Mr. Gammidge at the hour appointed, and then opened the second letter.

59, *Conduit-street, Juin, 1836.*

"Mademoiselle,—Esperant qu'une communauté de goûts et de succès donnent le droit de s'introduire soi-même auprès de ceux dont on désire vivement faire la connaissance, je me permets de solliciter l'honneur de votre amitié, et le plaisir de votre société Samedi prochain. Nous nous réunirons à 6 heures à un petit dîner, et il ne nous manquera que le charme de votre présence pour nous rendre tous heureux. Nous espérons bien que M. Vaughan ne refusera pas de vous accompagner. Recevez, Mademoiselle, l'assurance de ma considération la plus distinguée.

"M. F. MALIBRAN DE BÉRIOT."

(*Translation.*)

"Mademoiselle,—Hoping that a community of tastes and successes may furnish one with a pretext for self-introduction to those with whom one earnestly desires to become acquainted, I venture to solicit the honour of your friendship, and the pleasure of your company on Saturday next. We shall dine at six o'clock, and the charm of your presence will alone be needed to make us very happy. We

hope that Mr. Vaughan will not refuse to accompany you. Receive, Mademoiselle, the assurances of my high regard.

"M. F. MALIBRAN DE BERIOT."

An invitation from Malibran! An invitation so graceful, so cordial, and conveying withal so delicate a compliment! What could I do but accept it at once in my master's name and my own, rejoicing that the Italian had not been included, and looking forward to it as a child to a holiday?

Precisely as two o'clock struck the door opened, and Mr. Gammidge was announced.

Marvellously elaborate and splendid was his toilette on this occasion. Dazzling his waistcoat, luminous his hat, and immaculate his lemon-coloured kids. He looked pale and flurried, however, despite these glories, and when I requested him to take a chair, was on the point of sitting down in the coal-scuttle, but recovered himself in confusion.

"You had a communication to make to me, Mr. Gammidge," I said as kindly as I could. "I am very glad you have found out something that I can do for you."

He coughed again, fidgeted on his chair, and cast a regretful glance at the door.

"Yes, Miss Natalie, I—I had. That is to say, I have. There—there *are* situations, Miss Natalie, in which the heart—ahem! Moments in which—in short—in which one yearns to say to a—a sympathizing bosom . . . How exceedingly warm it is to day!"

"Exceedingly. Would you like the window open?"

"N—no, thank you, Miss Natalie—no, thank you. I'm very comfortable."

Here Mr. Gammidge succeeded in wriggling the button off one of his lemon-coloured kids, and then backed his chair into the fire-place.

"I think," said I, affecting to examine the nib of a pen, "I think, Mr. Gammidge, you were saying"

"Exactly so. I was saying, Miss Natalie—and I think when I say so I express the sentiments of every—ahem! every feeling heart—that—that—solitude, the solitude of, in fact, a bachelor, is not conducive to—to—what shall I say?—to general hilarity."

Having observed which, Mr. Gammidge sighed, and looked again at the door, and rubbed his head all over.

"Excuse me," I said, scarcely able to suppress a smile, "but if you are alluding to yourself, I never remarked any want of 'general hilarity' on your part. I have always considered you, Mr. Gammidge, as a very cheerful person."

"Love, Miss Natalie, is not calculated to make any man cheerful," said Mr. Gammidge with increased nervousness. "Certainly not while his mind and his appetite are in the—the despairing and uncomfortable state that mine are. I know nothing worse," said my visitor, energetically wrenching the button off the other glove, "except seasickness."

The remembrance of our excursion to Beachy Head, of Mr. Gammidge's unfortunate seamanship, and of the fatal quid which so materially discomfited him towards the close of the excursion, here returned to me so vividly that to refrain from smiling was impossible.

"Don't laugh at me, Miss Natalie," he said, hastily. "Please don't laugh at me. If you knew how miserable I am, and—and what a trial this is to me, you wouldn't have the heart—I'm sure you wouldn't! I declare to you, Miss Natalie," he added, fervently, "I'd—I'd rather wear tight boots for a week than go through this interview again!"

"Really," I said, "I beg your pardon; but you spoke of the sea, and I could not help it. I am very sorry, Mr. Gammidge, that you are so nervous and unsettled; but," and I hesitated in some apprehension, "but if the cause of your anxiety be as you say, I really do not see in what way I can be of service."

"Oh, don't say that, Miss Natalie," said Mr. Gammidge,

eagerly, "for if you can't help me, nobody can, and—and I'm sure there's thunder in the air!"

I rose and opened the window.

"If I can help you, Mr. Gammidge," I said, "you may command me, indeed you may; but in this instance I do not see"

"Oh, Miss Natalie," interrupted my visitor, "you're the very person!"

"I!"

"Oh, no! oh dear no! not in that sense, Miss Natalie! I shouldn't presume—Heaven forbid! ever to—to be guilty of such a liberty—oh, good gracious!"

"Then pray speak freely, Mr. Gammidge," I said, much relieved, "and tell me all about it. Do I know the lady?"

He laid his hand upon the place where his watch might be, and bowed.

"Surely not—I—I hope not"

"Yes it is, though," cried the chorus-master, tragically; "it is Miss Foster—'Katharina fair and virtuous,' as the Swan says. Say a good word for me, Miss Natalie, if you can; say a good word for me, for indeed the—the love and admiration I carry about with me day and night for that divine young person is the most astonishing sensation I ever felt in my life. I declare to you I've had the nightmare every night for a month, and have no relish left even for a Welsh rabbit!"

"Dear Mr. Gammidge," I said, gravely, "I am so sorry to hear this."

His countenance fell and he turned very red.

"You don't mean to say that"

"Miss Foster's affections have been engaged for years," I added.

"Are you sure of this, Miss Natalie?"

"Quite sure."

He remained silent for some minutes, looking on the ground, and then he fairly laid his head down upon the table and gave way.

"Oh, Miss Natalie," he said in a broken voice, "I'm a great fool—I know I am; but—but"

"But you are disappointed," I said, laying my hand gently on his arm. "Indeed, I am very sorry for you."

"Are you, Miss Natalie? It's very kind—very kind. I'm sure, I'm—I'm very much obliged to you; but I don't think I shall ever be happy again."

"You think so now."

"I don't know who he is, or what he is," said the poor fellow, lifting up his head, "but I hope he loves her as I do! One favour, Miss Natalie . . . you'll—you'll never mention what I've said to-day, will you?"

"Never, Mr. Gammidge."

"And I beg your pardon, Miss Natalie, for taking up your time, and making such a—such a confounded show of myself. I am ashamed"—here he gave a great gulp—"I am ashamed of having been so weak; but now, as—as the Swan says, 'Richard is himself again!'"

Two large tears were crossing each other on Richard's nose as he said this, but he brushed them off with his coat sleeve, took his hat up manfully, and bowing to me, said—

"Once more I beg your pardon, Miss Natalie. Thank you, and good morning."

"Good morning," I replied, and held out my hand, which he, in his gratitude and sorrow, lifted reverently to his lips. At this moment the door opened, and Romani stood, white with passion, on the threshold.

"*Maladetto!*" he said. "What is this? What are you doing here?"

"My visit, sir," said Mr. Gammidge, "is to this lady."

Romani, with an insulting gesture, pointed to the door.

"Leave the room, Impertinent! This lady shall receive no visitors but such as are welcome to me, and conduct themselves consistently with my honour. Leave the room, or"

"Don't threaten me, Signor Romani," said the chorus-master, spiritedly, "I am not disposed to bear it. Neither

do I wish to quarrel in the presence of a lady. Mademoiselle Natalie, once again I have the honour of wishing you good morning."

And Mr. Gammidge bowed, passed Romani without even looking at him, and went away with what was very much the air of a gentleman.

"Natalie," said the Italian, fiercely; "does that man dare to make love to you?"

But I rose and left the room without a word.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE MEXICAN PISTOLS.

It was Friday. The last Friday in June, 1836, and the day before that on which I was engaged to dine with Madame Malibran. For nearly eight months I had held the position of first soprano at the theatre. For the last two months I had been playing twice, and sometimes thrice in every week, and, notwithstanding the fame of the great vocalist who performed on the alternate evenings, had found no diminution of my own popularity. During all this period I had been in the weekly receipt of sixty pounds, my expenses had been moderate, and I had already lodged seventeen hundred pounds with a banking establishment in the city. I generally received my salary on Friday evenings, either before or after the performance, and Mr. Vaughan took it himself down to the bank every Saturday morning. The late hour of payment thus compelled me to keep it one night in the house; but I always got rid of it as soon as possible, for I was unused to the charge of money, and sixty pounds seemed so large a sum to me! However, we used to lock it up very safely and carefully in the great oaken bureau at the further end of the long parlour, and my master carried the keys up to bed. I enter into these particulars because they are necessary to the explanation of what I am about to relate.

On this Friday night I went to the treasury after the opera was over. I had been playing, if I remember rightly, the part of *Ninetta* in "*La Gazza Ladra*;" and Taglioni was dancing in the ballet that followed after. My master came to the theatre to see me home, for Romani, enraged with me, and jealous of Mr. Gammidge, had not been near the house for three or four days.

I was in better spirits than usual. He had not once looked at me from his place in the orchestra all the evening, and I almost dared to entertain a hope that he would trouble me no more. So, when Mr. Vaughan came round to the green-room, I met him with one of the old smiles, and took his arm, and we went to the treasury together.

Mr. Gammidge was leaning against the wall with his hands in his pockets, talking to the treasurer as we came up. His shirt-collar hung down limply, his neckcloth was on one side, and he looked very red still about the eyes.

"Well, Miss Natalie," he said, "we meet here on the same errand, I suppose! Can't do without the precious metal. Must vow obedience to King Gold. Heigho!"

"And yet, you remember, Mr. Gammidge," I said, "that 'tis gold which makes the true man kill'd and saves the thief." I thought you never disagreed with Shakspeare."

Mr. Gammidge shook his head ruefully and walked away.

"Ah, Miss Natalie," he sighed, "Shakspeare disagrees with me as well as everything else! I've no heart left to quote the Swan now! Hollo! what the deuce . . . why, it's Giblets!"

At that name I turned hastily, and saw Mr. Gammidge stooping over some dark object in an angle of the passage.

"Poor devil!" said the chorus-master, compassionately. "Is this where he sleeps of a night? Here, Giblets! Wake up, can't you?"

He stirred him gently with his foot, but Giblets only moaned, as it were in his dreams, and curled himself up closer, so Mr. Gammidge passed on after a minute, and we followed.

It was a warm delicious night, and the sky looked unutterably dark and deep. Here and there a solitary star burnt steadfastly, like the lamp of a wise virgin traversing "the holy aisles of heaven."

We walked three or four times round the market, enjoying the quiet, and the tracts of shadow under the piazza. Then the people began to pour out of the theatres, and my master turned towards home.

"It often surprises me," he said, musingly, "that the early Greeks, whose very philosophy was the soul of poetry, should have conceived so meanly of the heavenly bodies, and regarded astronomy as a mere speculation, and 'the very coinage of the brain.' Anaximenes, for instance, taught that the stars and sun were circular plates of fire suspended, like flytraps, from the vault of heaven: and Anaxagoras, the Ionian, supposed 'this brave o'erhanging firmament' to consist of a mere roof of stones built all around us, and only kept from falling in upon our heads by the rapidity of its circular motion."

"Yet," I suggested, "it was Plato who called the stars 'the eyes of heaven.'"

"Hah! a fine thought," said my master, "and one that makes us forgive Anaxagoras for the sake of Plato. Shakespeare was less happy than usual in his metaphor when he compared the stars to 'patines of bright gold.' But that is a noble line of the Greek sage, and carries with it a fine element of truth, as well as of imagination. Good poetry is a generous compensation at any time for poor philosophy."

We had now reached our own door. My master knocked, and we were standing out on the pavement, still looking upward at the subjects of our conversation, when a peculiar impulse led me to glance back at the end of the street by which we had entered from the market. It was strange, and I thought it might be only my own feverish fancy, but I seemed to see a crouching shapeless shadow stealing along under the gloom of the farthest houses!

The door opened. I turned back and looked again. This time I could distinguish nothing . . . besides, had I not seen him asleep only a few minutes before!

"Come, Natalie!" cried my master. "What are you doing out there?"

"Trying to read my fortune by the planets!" I answered, laughingly, and ran in.

The child had gone to bed long since, and one of the servants. Supper was waiting; but I felt oppressed, somehow, with a vague uneasiness, and could eat nothing.

"I am nervous," I thought, "and somewhat shaken both physically and mentally by the fatigues of the season and the persecutions of Romani. This is nothing but an accidental resemblance, and I shall sleep the impression off."

But I was mistaken. Tired as I was, I could not get rid of that heavy sense of evil. I occupied the bedroom situated immediately over the farthest end of Mr. Vaughan's parlour. My master's chamber was just overhead. I heard him close his window, cross the room once or twice, and then get into bed. I heard the quarters chime from the church in the market several times. I heard the clock strike one. Now and then I sank into an uneasy dose, and every time I woke in terror with the name of Giblets on my lips.

Getting, however, very weary at last, I fell into a deeper sleep, which seemed to endure for a considerable time.

Grate, grate, grate!

I dreamt I was in prison. The guards were talking and drinking in the guard-room beyond, and Louis was there, with the file in his hand, filing away the cruel bars that caged me in. Suddenly Giblets stood beside him, scowling and defiant—I sprang forward and thank heaven! it was only a dream!

Grate, grate, grate!

What! am I dreaming still? Surely I *am* awake, and yet—how strange!—I seem to hear the filing still going on! Gracious powers, it is no delusion now! *I do hear it!*

Trembling from head to foot, turning hot and cold, leaning forward and holding my breath, till to do so for another moment is agony, I sit up in the bed to listen, and hear my own heart beating.

It is at the parlour window below. The window that opens from the yard, close by the bureau. The bureau! In one second I see it all plainly! see the whole plot and aim and solution of it. The letter—the watchings—the figure seeming to sleep by the treasury door—the money in the oaken press below!

Fool that I was not to dream of this before!

And all this time it goes on grate, grate, grate! Hark! a sound as of some brittle substance snapping—a murmur of suppressed voices—the window being raised swiftly and softly!

Nay then, I have no time to spare!

Knowing that they are now actually in the house, it needs some little firmness and resolution to open my own door, steal along the landing, and creep with my bare feet up the adjoining staircase. Once arrived there, I have to encounter a new difficulty. Supposing that he has locked his door, I may have to make so much noise as will alarm the burglars! They may rush up before I succeed in waking him, and then . . . Alas! it *is* locked! No; it only resists for a moment, and I am safe.

"Wake, Mr. Vaughan! my dear master, wake! Hush! It is only Natalie!"

"What's the matter? Fire?"

"No—robbers. They have got in by the back parlour window, and are breaking open the bureau."

He is collected and cool in an instant.

"Go into the child's closet for a moment, Natalie, while I dress; and here, take my travelling cloak and wrap it about you! Hah! these old Mexican pistols are good friends now, and have seen service. Fear nothing, child! Now then, I'm ready. Come along—or would you rather stay up here?"

"I'll go with you, of course."

"That's a brave girl! Now hush! Not a whisper for your life!"

Slowly and cautiously we steal down the stairs, and, pausing half way to listen, hear a curious sort of clicking, then the lifting of the heavy lid, and then the chink of gold.

"Confound them!" mutters my master, "they have got the money already! Nothing for it now but powder and shot!"

So saying, he clears the remaining steps at a bound. There is the simultaneous report of two pistols, and the fall of some heavy piece of furniture.

"You damned villains!" says my master. "You shall pay for this!"

By the time I get to the parlour door the room is so full of smoke that I can see nothing save the open window, and my master leaning out.

"Are you hurt?"

"Not a bit, nor the thieves either, I'm afraid! The fellow that fired at me is gone over that wall. What the deuce became of the other? I'm sure I saw two! By Jove! there's a man by the water-but!"

The weapon is levelled in a moment, and, before I can stay his hand, he has fired! The report is followed by a cry of agony.

"You've killed him!"

"My God, I'm afraid so!"

All this happened in a moment; yet it seems to take so long on paper!

The neighbours were awake and at their windows now; the police were knocking furiously at the door; Alice was crying—"Papa! Papa! where is Papa?" and the servants were trembling in their night-clothes on the staircase. I opened the door, and admitted the men.

"Let us go down to the garden," said Mr. Vaughan in an agitated voice. "I—I fear I've shot a man."

So they go, and the police stoop down with their lanterns and examine him.

"Is he dead?"

"Well, he seems like it," says one.

"It's of fright then," says another, "for see, here's all the harm he's got! only a little wound in the leg!"

"Bring him into the house and fetch a surgeon," exclaims my master. "Good heavens! if the man were to die I should never forgive myself!"

"No fear o' that, sir," replies one of them. "I believe he's only shamming. He's a queer lookin' customer, anyhow! Suppose we lay him along the table."

I have kept back till now, but, seeing him laid on the table, can no longer resist the promptings of curiosity.

As I had anticipated! Giblets.

"Have you seen him before, ma'am?" asks one of the policemen, observing the expression of my countenance.

"Frequently. He is a poor idiot belonging to Drury Lane Theatre. Pray be gentle with him."

Mr. Vaughan is utterly puzzled. "Giblets!" he says repeatedly. "Giblets mixed up with it! I can't believe my eyes. Here, police! I take this man under my protection. I'll be responsible for his appearance. He's nothing but an idiot, and I'm sure there must be some mistake here. You shall leave him with us, at all events for to-night."

"As you please, sir," says the inspector; "but, have you lost anything?"

Anything? Everything! The drawer of the bureau is rifled, and not a farthing of the sixty pounds remains!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

CONFESSION.

"WONT you go in and see that poor wretch down-stairs?" said my master. "The surgeon has just been and left again. He says the wound is a mere trifle (which I'm heartily glad to hear), and that he will be able to leave his bed in less than a week. I have been down, but I can make nothing of him, and I want to find some clue to the other fellow. Women always manage these things better than men. Can't you sit by his bedside for half-an-hour or so, and try to extract something from him?"

"I will make the attempt, if you like, but I have no confidence in the result."

"Oh, but I have! so come, at all events."

It was now about twelve o'clock on the Saturday morning. None of us had been to bed again, except the child. My master, indeed, after locking the doors and windows, and seeing the house everywhere secured, had been down to the police-office, and backwards and forwards for the surgeon, and along some of the neighbours' yards at the back, and, in fact, was walking about till the shops were all opened and the people stirring as usual. I had laid down on a sofa at about five in the morning and slept till nine or ten; and the servants had taken it in turn to sit up and watch our wounded prisoner. They made him a temporary bed in a little empty store-room, near the parlour, where, after the surgeon had extracted the bullet, they removed him.

Here, then, I went, in compliance with my master's wishes; but, to speak truth, very reluctantly as far as my own feelings were concerned. At the door he paused.

"My presence seems to disturb him," he said; "I think you had better go in alone."

I went in alone.

His face was turned from me as I entered. The matted locks lay scattered over the pillow, and one hand was thrown outside the clothes. After standing a few seconds by the door, I conquered my repugnance sufficiently to approach the bedside. What a strange, distorted hand and arm it was! Gnarled, and knotted, and withered up, like the branch of a blasted tree!

"Giblets," I said, distinctly but softly, "are you asleep?"

A convulsive twitching of the hand and a shuddering movement of the shoulders showed that he both heard and recognised me.

"Come, look round at me! Why, surely you are not afraid?"

He was trembling convulsively from head to foot, and, as I said this, buried his face more closely in the pillow.

The sight of his terror gave me entire self-possession, so I drew a chair beside him, and sat down in silence.

This silence lasted for several minutes, unbroken by either. Presently, as I expected, he raised his head cautiously, and looked round; but, seeing me still there, shrank back directly to his old posture.

"No," I said in the same deliberate tone, "I am not gone; and I shall not go till you speak to me. Why are you afraid? I am not angry with you."

But he only moaned, and writhed a little at the first sound of my voice; so, finding he made no answer, I went on.

"I never harmed you—I should have been kind to you if you had let me. Why do you shudder when I speak? Did I ever tease you, Giblets? or mock at you? or say an unkind word to you? Tell me that."

A sort of catching at his breath and an impatient movement of the knotted hand, but no word of reply.

"Even now, Giblets, I feel no anger against you, and yet you have aided to do me a great wrong. I will not believe that you knew how great a wrong it was, or I am sure, seeing how gentle I had always been towards you, you could not have done it. But let us say no more of that at present. I forgive you, and that's enough. Come, let us be friends."

Saying this, I venture to lay my hand for a moment on his sleeve. As if that light touch had sufficed to unbar the floodgates of his very being, he bursts into a fit of gasping sobs, and exclaims in broken accents:—

"There never was anybody spoke so kind to me before Why do you speak so kind? why don't you why don't you worry, like the rest on 'em? What's your voice so kind for . . . and . . . and your looks so cruel?"

"My looks cruel!" I exclaimed. "You can't mean that, Giblets. My looks are not cruel."

"Your eyes are cruel."

"Oh, no!—no! Turn round and look at them—turn round and look at them before you say that!"

It is a long time before I can persuade him, however, to do this. When he does turn, seeing the real pity and

emotion in them, he heaves a sigh of relief, and says, with the tears still wet upon his rugged cheeks,—

"They're not cruel now. They're not like what they were the other night."

"Then you were afraid of me that night?"

"Yes. They were so bright, and big, and cruel, and the face so white! It looked like the body, only the eyes alive!"

Here he shuddered and would have turned away again, but for the hand still resting on his arm.

"Like the body, Giblets? Like what body?"

"The body, you know . . . the gal . . . up at the New River. Oof! I saw 'em pull her out. So white!—so white!"

"Well, well," I said, soothingly, "I don't look pale now, Giblets. I was excited then; but I was neither cruel nor angry. Besides, you were watching me. You and—that other! What would you do if any one followed and watched after you night and day for weeks?"

"Hush!" said he, in a quick whisper, glancing fearfully round the room. "Hush! It did."

"What did?"

"The body. It kept at my heels for months and years, and never left me. It's gone away now—but it may come back some day. Do you think it will come back?"

"Oh, no—never again. But let us try to forget that, Giblets. Tell me now about this woman. How did she persuade you to follow me about? What did she say to you?"

He looked up at me suspiciously, and shook his head.

"Let me see now," I said, as if considering with myself. "First of all, she—she spoke to you, didn't she? Ah, I thought so. Told you to see where I went, and all I did, and gave you that letter . . ."

"No, no," he interrupted, eagerly. "I didn't put it there!"

I laid my finger reproachfully upon my lip, and looked at him. His eyes fell.

"She gave you that letter for me, and you put it there

Giblets," I said. "You must never tell me a falsehood, for you see I know all the truth. Hush! I am not angry with you, and I am smiling now!"

But he covered his face with his hands and began to sob again.

"I shouldn't care so much," he cried, "if . . . if you weren't so kind to me! That's the worst!—that's the worst!"

Thinking it as well not to notice this, I went back to the old subject, and spoke of it still in the same manner, as I would have spoken to a child.

"After you had put the letter there, she got you to find out where I lived, wasn't that it? And—and she gave you money for this, eh?"

"Not often," said he. "It was drink."

"Ay—so it was. Well now, and last night? Where was she last night when you were pretending to be asleep in the passage by the treasury door?"

"Gone."

"She was gone then. Very well. But she told you to see if Mr. Edgar paid me money, didn't she?"

He nodded.

"And then you watched me home?"

"Yes."

"Well, and what happened after that?"

He clutched at the bed-clothes nervously, and looked up at me with a piteous pleading in his eyes.

"They will murder me if I tell you! Don't make me tell you!"

"They shall not harm you," I said. "I will protect you and be kind to you always, and no one shall harm you."

"Will you be kind to me always?" he asked eagerly.

"Always."

"And never threaten me—or worry me—or mock me?"

"Never."

He sank back with a faint smile on his lips, and remained silent for some minutes. Then of his own accord he resumed the subject.

"After the money was paid and you were gone home with it, I went back to the old place where she always comes——"

"Behind the pillars?"

"Yes, behind the pillars. 'Did she take it home?' says the woman, and when I says 'yes,' the man comes out from a public opposite, and then I goes in there with 'em both, and they give me drink, and then he takes and puts some files and things in his pocket, and we go out. And when I've showed him the house, he takes me round by a back-way and we come over a wall, and he opens the winder, and that's all."

"And then you got shot, my poor fellow! Well, never mind, you'll soon get well again."

"And you're not angry?"

"Not at all."

"And you wont look cruel no more?"

I answer him with a smile, and rise to go.

"You'll come back, wont you?" he says eagerly. "I want you here now you're so kind!"

"Yes, I'll come back by and bye; and you can try to sleep in the meantime. See now, I will draw the blind, so that the light shall not fall upon your eyes—and I will put this barley-water beside the bed, in case you should feel thirsty. There, I think you could sleep now, Giblets, if you tried."

"I'll try, for you," he says, with the obedience of a child—"you speak so kind."

So, turning his face to the wall, he closes his eyes, and when I look in again about half-an-hour after, he is sleeping profoundly.

And all that day, and for many days following, the search goes on vainly. Giblets has no more to tell, and no trace of the robber can be found. Of one thing, however, I feel certain. By Mrs. Jones I was robbed before, and through Mrs. Jones I have been robbed now. No one but herself could have indited the anonymous letter left by Giblets on my dressing-table some two months or eight weeks since. She alone, having in her possession my pocket-

book and letters, could have contrived those allusions to Fribourg. She it was whom I saw in the gallery of the theatre on the night of Malibran's return. She it was whom I saw that night under the colonnade. I found Giblets utterly incapable of personal description. He only knew if a countenance looked sullen, or indifferent, or kind, and had no conception of anything like portraiture in language. When I asked him if this woman had one drooping eye, he only shook his head. She looked evil. She didn't look like me. That was all he could tell of her.

I laid these facts, of course, before the proper authorities, but to no purpose.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A DINNER WITH MALIBRAN.

"You are more than welcome," said Malibran, coming forward and taking me by both hands with a charming air of mingled hesitation and cordiality. "You are more than welcome, Mademoiselle—and you, also, Monsieur Vaughan."

Her luxuriant hair was gathered in rich braids at the back of her head and drawn somewhat off from her face, like that of Raphael's *belle Jardinière*. Her simple white dress, contrary to the fashion of the time, was long and flowing, and fastened at the throat by a plain gold clasp, and, excepting on her slender fingers, she wore no jewels.

There were two gentlemen sitting by a farther window, who rose as we entered. One of these was dark, slender, and intelligent-looking—the other somewhat below the middle height, florid, *moyen âge*, and not devoid of a certain heavy regularity of features which might, some fifteen years earlier, have given him claims to the reputation of personal beauty.

Towards the first of these, drawing my arm through hers with a winning smile, she now led me.

"You must allow me," she said, "to introduce to you my husband."

The usual bows were exchanged.

"As for this gentleman," she then said, turning towards the other, "he is, if I mistake not, one of your best and oldest friends—as he is mine."

Much surprised, I found myself compelled to disclaim the honour of his acquaintance. I had never seen him before in my life.

Malibran laughed gaily.

"That may very well be," she replied, "and yet I repeat that you and I are alike under very deep obligations to him. Did you not perform in 'La Gazza Ladra' last evening?"

"Yes."

"And in 'La Donna del Lago' two nights before?"

"Yes."

"Well then—this is Signor Rossini."

In the midst of my surprise and her amusement the dinner was announced, and we passed into an adjoining room.

The dinner-table was laid with flowers, fruits, sweet-meats, and more than a dozen different sorts of wines; but the dishes were brought in and laid on a side-table, to be handed round by the servants. Beside each person's plate was placed a bouquet of white camellias and an amethyst-coloured glass cup filled with rose-water. Soon the slender-necked amber Rhine-bottles went merrily round, and, before the third course was over, evoked a stream of pleasant talk.

"I should think," said my master, "that the 'immortal' Falernian must have borne some resemblance to our Madeira—yours, by the way, Madame, is perfection. The soil of the Campagna Felice is said to be analogous to that of Madeira, and we know, upon the authority of Martial, that the Falernian vintage yielded a light, dry, straw-coloured wine, such as this."

"I have no belief in the wines of antiquity," said Malibran laughingly; "and I never wished, like Keats, for the 'blushful Hippocrene.' Classic grapes are sour."

"The modern Italian wines are admirable," observed Rossini, "and very little known in England. You know what Redi says—'*Montepulciano d'ogni vino é il Ré!*'"

"You get a very good wine in the neighbourhood of Pæstum," said my master.

"You have been in my country?" asked the composer quickly.

"I was in Italy at the time when '*La Gazza Ladra*' was first put upon the stage," replied my master with a sigh. "It was in the year 1816. I was passing through Milan at the time, on my way to Rome and Naples, and had the pleasure of joining my plaudits to those of the rest of the audience. It was very shortly after my marriage, and, although that journey was the most delightful of my life, I assure you there is no event connected with it of which I retain a pleasanter remembrance."

The *maestro* bowed and smiled, and Mr. Vaughan continued.

"More than a hundred times that evening, Signor Rossini, you were compelled to rise and salute the audience. I never beheld so great a triumph."

"And I," said the composer, shrugging his shoulders, "never had such a pain in my back!"

"Hush!" exclaimed Malibran, shaking her head reproachfully at him. "Hush! Why do you affect to scorn your own glory? It should be your greatest pride. For myself, I would give the half of my life for that immortality which you despise."

"But you have it, Madame."

"Alas! no. What is the reputation of a singer? It is but the echo of a sound, dies away after a few seasons, and is utterly forgotten. The player's fame is ever fugitive; and an opera-reputation is the most fugitive of all. The vocalist does not appeal, like the comedian, to all classes; but is the favourite of a small circle which, in comparison with the great mass of the public, is but a private *coterie*. It seems to me that we are more to be pitied than any other class of people. We live our little day—are intoxicated by boundless successes—are sup-

planted, neglected, forgotten, and called upon, as it were, to assist at our own funerals."

"My dear lady," remonstrated Mr. Vaughan, "you do your art injustice. You forget the great names which still charm us with the tradition of fame. Who would not like to have heard Nell Gwynn and Kitty Clive?"

"I would rather have heard Anastasia Robinson," said Malibran eagerly.

"Yes; on account of her romantic history."

"And the fascinations of her person and manners," added Malibran's husband.

"The woman," I observed, "who could succeed in fixing the volatile tastes and boundless requisitions of a man so extraordinary as Lord Peterborough, must have been worth seeing and hearing. I do not know that I was ever more affected than by that charming episode introduced by Dr. Burney into his *History of Music*, wherein he describes the formal announcement of his marriage, made by Lord Peterborough to his family. I never think of that passage without fancying that I see the old-fashioned room over the gateway of St. James's Palace, where the scene took place—the relations standing round with wondering faces—the noble general and statesman speaking out in gallant praise of his fair wife; and the beautiful lady, overcome with surprise and emotion, fainting away in the midst of his discourse."

"An exquisite picture," said Malibran with the tears in her eyes, "and one that deserves to be painted." Then, with a sort of sudden, reckless gaiety that was familiar to her, "I should not have cared to marry a lord," she added. "I have no ambition. Nature meant me for a strolling player!"

"Mr. Vaughan laughed.

"A pleasant *métier* enough," he said. "The strolling player is Fortune's shuttlecock, and goes through life much after the same plumed, airy, and unsatisfactory manner. 'His mind to him a kingdom is,' and he floats like a buoy through the storm that wrecks many a worthier vessel."

"I have an engraving in my library at Roissy," said Malibran, "which affords me perpetual delight. It is after your English Hogarth, and represents a company of these players preparing for a performance in a barn. The story is so admirably told that I laugh whenever I look at it."

"Other pictures we look at—his we read," said my master, quoting Lamb.

"Your observations," said Rossini, "remind me of our '*troupes ambulantes*,' which, however, in Italy, are held in some consideration. At the time of the fairs and harvests little companies are formed, consisting of eight or ten persons and a small orchestra. There is a soprano, a contralto, a tenor, a bass, a second soprano, and a second basso. These two latter support the comic under-plot. The soprano is the heroine. The tenor is always in love. The contralto plays a mischievous page, and the basso is an angry father, or a jealous husband, as the case may be. The fairs follow each other in a regular succession during the summer months, and the nomadic party goes from town to town with wagons and mules, like a gang of gipsies. When the cold season sets in, they divide their gains, return each to their native town, and meet again next spring for the same purpose."

"What a delightful life!" exclaimed Malibran.

"Very," replied the *maestro*. "I never was so happy as when I belonged to it."

"You, Signor Rossini!" we all exclaimed.

"Yes, I," he rejoined, smiling at our astonishment. "I was born of a family of wandering artists. My father played the horn in the orchestra, my mother was the second soprano, and I was alternately pianist and chorus-singer. In the winter time we lived at home in our own little town of Pesaro. It was the gayest of lives, but I renounced it, and the Countess Perticari (to whose health I drink this glass) placed me in the Academy of Bologna to study counter-point."

"Of course, then," said Malibran's husband, "opera is the staple performance of these *troupes*."

"Undoubtedly. You must not confound them with the peripatetic bands of extempore masks and Fantoccini."

"I thought that the extempore comedy was quite extinct now," I said, "and that the comedies of Goldoni, founded upon the materials of the old traditionary plot, had taken its place."

"Not entirely," replied the composer. "I saw an admirable harlequin of the old school some few years since in an obscure theatre at Milan; but we hold the masked comedy in utter contempt now, and it is supported only by the lower classes in the Sunday representations at the theatres and in the puppet-shows. Indeed, the improvisations of Signor Punch are much better worth hearing."

"I have laughed more at the Policinella of the San Carlino theatre than I ever hope to laugh again," said my master. "He was the wittiest rogue in all Naples, and the best worth visiting."

"And I," said Malibran, "could not tear myself away from the Girolamo theatre of Milan. I am passionately fond of dolls and puppets, and nothing delights me more than to see the elegant hero of the ballet lose all his limbs, one after the other, and resume them again as if nothing unusual had happened—or to watch that immoral old gentleman, Mr. Punch, beating his wife, offering indignities to the beadle, and being carried off to perdition at last by death or the devil. It is strange that human nature should take this pleasure in the mockery of itself. But I suppose the feeling arises from the same sense of amused superiority with which we watch the antics of the monkeys in a menagerie. By the way, Signor Rossini, you must come to my box to-morrow evening and see Taglioni. Will you join us, Mr. Vaughan?"

My master shook his head.

"I thank you," he said, "but I dislike stage-dancing infinitely. I have no objection to see puppets imitate humanity; but it shocks me to see humanity imitating puppets."

"You have not seen Taglioni, or you would not say so," exclaimed Malibran warmly. "Hers is the true poetry

of motion. She floats upon the air like a rose-leaf, and every action seems to be an echo of the music. Pray come, Mr. Vaughan, and let me convert you. A true artist should be accessible to art in all its branches."

"Madame," said my master, "I cannot dignify strength of muscle and skilful gravitation with the name of Art."

"And why not? Where grace and beauty are evolved it is hard to deny the merit by which they are produced, or the refined pleasure which they give to others. Any performance that is difficult of achievement, and beautiful when achieved, deserves the name of an art."

"I don't deny its difficulty," said my master. "I only wish, with Doctor Johnson, that it were impossible."

Malibran laughed at this, and the conversation flowed into other channels. Presently she drew a vase of flowers near her, and buried her face for some seconds in the roses and camellias.

"I am so passionately fond of flowers," she said, "that I often regret the classic custom of wreath-wearing at banquets. I am not quite sure, however, that a wreath round the goblet improved the flavour of the wine. Not long since I was playing *Desdemona* at the Paris opera-house for my benefit (by the way, they got up your 'Otello' very magnificently, Signor Rossini), and the stage was covered with bouquets. It was the very first time that flowers had been thrown upon the Paris stage, and I never beheld any more lovely; but you see I was obliged to die, and it was a great pity, for under the circumstances I couldn't pick them up. Well, *Otello* had to die also, and the man was *bête* enough to prepare to stab himself just where he must fall on at least half a dozen of the best. This was more than I could endure; so, although I was quite dead at the time, I exclaimed in a low voice—'Take care of my flowers! Take care of my flowers!' Louis Philippe was in a side-box that night and heard me; and so the next day I had a magnificent present of exotics from St. Cloud, with a polite message signifying that his majesty, observing my posthumous love of floriculture, begged my acceptance of the accompanying tribute."

Presently we rose from table and passed into the other room, where we sang songs in the twilight. At ten o'clock coffee was served, and at eleven my master and I rose to take leave.

"*Pardon*," said Malibran, leading me away gaily; "I must usurp Mademoiselle for a few moments. *Tenez! nous avons un secret, nous deux!*"

She opened the door of the dining-room, and, somewhat surprised, I followed her. The apartment was dark and empty; all traces of our pleasant feast had vanished; and the blue moonlight streamed through the open window. By this window we stood, and the night air blew upon our faces. She was silent for some seconds. Then she sighed and looked at me.

"You wonder why I have brought you here," she said; "but you will be more surprised when I explain my reason. Promise me first, *chère Mademoiselle*, that you will not be offended with me."

"I am sure I may promise that," I said smiling.

"I asked you to-day for your society," she said hesitatingly, "and you were so obliging as not to refuse it to me. Now, however, I am about to ask you for something still more precious."

"Name it, Madame," I said, with increasing astonishment.

She seemed embarrassed—then, passing her arm caressingly about my waist, she bent her face nearer, and whispered—

"Your confidence!"

Surprise this time kept me silent; but she went on.

"I have observed you, Mademoiselle, for many weeks—observed with pain the—the suffering which you endure daily. Nay, do not shake your head. I will not be contradicted. Others may not see it, but I am a gipsy and can tell fortunes, and I see it only too plainly. Ever since I have been at the theatre I have noticed that you grow paler and more nervous. Your hand, your eye, your every action is feverish and excited. Sometimes you can with difficulty get through your *rôle*. Ah! I have watched all

this, and I have borne too much grief myself not to know the symptoms. Your illness is of the mind. You suffer in secret. You have not confided your anxiety to a soul, and it is killing you. Am I not right?"

But I am trembling now, and have turned away my head, and have no power to answer.

One hand was already round my waist, but she put the other up timidly to my face and turned it gently towards her.

"Trust me," she whispered; "I also have suffered!"

The action, the tone, the beautiful eyes, looking compassion and tenderness, touched my heart at once, and I burst into tears.

"Hush!" she said, soothingly, drawing my head to her bosom and putting my hair back from my brow, as if I had been a child. "Hush! no weeping! Tell me what it is! Is it the *mal de pays*? Do you pine for Switzerland?"

"No—no! Oh, not that now!"

"And why not *now*?"

"Because there is no one in Switzerland now who loves me!"

"Is it that—that you have an attachment?"

I shook my head.

"But you do love some one?"

"No, Madame."

"Not—not Signor Romani?"

I shuddered and covered my face with my hands.

"Him least of all," I exclaimed, brokenly. "I—I loathe him!"

A long interval ensued, during which neither of us spoke. The silence was at last broken by my companion.

"This was precisely what I feared," she said with emotion. "Come and sit by me on the sofa and tell me all, and let me help you if I can; for I believe and hope that it is in my power to do so."

So I sat beside her on the sofa in the dark room and told her all—all my persecutions, all my suspicions, all my sufferings. When I had done, she said—

"Write to-morrow morning to Signor Romani, and say that you do not love him—that you never can love him—that you are weary of his importunities, and that you wish never to see him more."

"That would be of no avail. I have told him that I do not love him over and over again."

"Desire your servants not to admit him."

"But I must see him every time I go to the theatre."

She reflected for some minutes.

"Have you signed any agreement with the manager?" she asked.

"None."

"And you are out of health. Any one can see that."

"Well?"

"Well, the season is not far from its close, and illness is a sufficient cause at all times for retirement. See the manager privately. Tell him that you must have change of air and scene. Enjoin him not to make it public in the theatre, and give him time to engage some other in your place. Then go without entrusting your address to any one, and leave the letter to be delivered to Signor Romani when you are fairly out of reach. Three or four months at some quiet watering place will then give you new life and spirits, and next season when you return you will meet this Italian with *sang froid*, if he should still happen to be engaged at the theatre."

"I wish it were possible!"

"It is possible, *ma chère*. Everything is possible to a strong will."

"But then—supposing that—that . . ."

"Supposing what?"

"That he went utterly from his mind!"

Malibran shrugged her shoulders with a pretty, indifferent, doubtful gesture, utterly French.

"*Ma foi!*" said she, "he is half mad now, and I am sure, as far as that goes, he had better be quite mad or quite sane than neither the one nor the other. You are not accountable for his reason."

"Oh, Madame!"

this, and I have borne too much grief myself not to know the symptoms. Your illness is of the mind. You suffer in secret. You have not confided your anxiety to a soul, and it is killing you. Am I not right?"

But I am trembling now, and have turned away my head, and have no power to answer.

One hand was already round my waist, but she put the other up timidly to my face and turned it gently towards her.

"Trust me," she whispered; "I also have suffered!"

The action, the tone, the beautiful eyes, looking compassion and tenderness, touched my heart at once, and I burst into tears.

"Hush!" she said, soothingly, drawing my head to her bosom and putting my hair back from my brow, as if I had been a child. "Hush! no weeping! Tell me what it is! Is it the *mal de pays*? Do you pine for Switzerland?"

"No—no! Oh, not that now!"

"And why not now?"

"Because there is no one in Switzerland now who loves me!"

"Is it that—that you have an attachment?"

I shook my head.

"But you do love some one?"

"No, Madame."

"Not—not Signor Romani?"

I shuddered and covered my face with my hands.

"Him least of all," I exclaimed, brokenly. "I loathe him!"

A long interval ensued, during which neither spoke. The silence was at last broken by my own

"This was precisely what I feared," she said, emotion. "Come and sit by me on the sofa."

all, and let me help you if I can. I will tell you that it is in my power to do so."

So I sat beside her on the sofa, and she told her all—all my past life, all my sufferings. When I

and its
from the
the lawn,
Beyond
quarter of a

The tone in which I said this conveyed somewhat of a reproach. She blushed, and laughed, and blushed again.

"You think me hard-hearted," she said, "but I speak for your good, and as your true friend. Why should you, a young, beautiful, clever girl, sacrifice your life and your happiness for a creature who is half a lunatic? It would be a sin both towards yourself and heaven! How came you ever to yield to this bondage?"

"Alas, I know not. I have feared him so—I—I have not dared—I am ashamed of myself, Madame, for being so weak."

"*Bien*," she said. "I can understand that perfectly. When one has left home and friends and native land for ever, it is hard to be as brave as if one had never suffered. But you will be advised by me?"

She took my hand and I remained silent. There was a ring upon my finger which he had placed there a few weeks before.

"Did he give you that ring?" she asked.

I answered in the affirmative, and she took it from my finger.

"There," she said, "return the bauble to the Signor with your letter, and speak to-morrow morning to the manager. I am resolved that you shall follow my advice, Mademoiselle, and, if you like, I will assist at your interview. May I?"

Her hand was lying on my shoulder, and, for reply, I pressed my lips down gratefully upon it.

"Then it is all agreed?"

"Yes."

"And our imperious lover is to be summarily dismissed, and Mademoiselle Metz is to be happy?"

"Free, at all events," I said; "free from a weight of care and an intolerable chain. Oh, Madame, you have saved me!"

But she laid her hand over my mouth, and saying, "To-morrow morning, then, at the theatre," rose from the sofa and returned with me to the other room.

"What is the matter, Natalie?" said my master. "You look pale. You have been weeping."

"Mademoiselle is not well," said Malibran, replying for me. "I have been recommending some remedies for her, and, perhaps, have alarmed her a little at the same time. She must have change of air, Monsieur Vaughan. See how thin and suffering she looks."

"It is true," exclaimed my master, looking anxiously at me. "Why have I not observed it sooner? You have never complained, Natalie!"

I shook my head and forced a smile.

"I am not really very ill," I replied, "but I believe that I am not as strong as formerly. I will try change of air, since Madame advises it. And now, good night!"

The usual compliments and farewells were then exchanged, and, as Malibran parted from me, she kissed me on each cheek, and once more whispered—

"To-morrow morning! Remember!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE AYLERS.

It is a warm, delicious afternoon, and the sun, after hiding away in cloud and mist these three days past, shines out over the sea in shifting lines of brilliant green and amber. Great masses of fleecy cumulus are suspended here and there, like white islands, in the blue waste overhead—the dragon-flies are darting about on opalescent wings—the sweet south wind is blowing again, and there is a bounteous peace and beauty upon all the autumn landscape and the dreamy ocean.

Our little cottage, with its vine, its verandah, and its embowering trees, lies back at some distance from the shore upon a wooded hill. In front extends the lawn, studded with beds of geranium and verbena. Beyond that a meadow; and beyond the meadow, a quarter of a

mile of furze, the beach, and the sea. The grounds adjoining ours are more extensive, and surround a pretty villa which stands somewhat higher and commands a wider, though not a more beautiful prospect. These two are the only houses of a better class in sight; but down at the foot of the hilly amphitheatre surrounding our little bay, is a cluster of fishermen's huts and a row of boats drawn up, high and dry, upon the shore. The voices of the children playing there while their fathers mend their nets in the sun, are borne to us now and then by the breeze. A soft haze indicates the direction of the French coast. Sometimes a gull comes wheeling by; and sometimes a trim yacht, or a stately brig with all sails set, glides slowly past, and is reflected along the quiet waters as if in the surface of a mirror.

Yonder, beneath the shade of a drooping laburnum, sits my master, reading. An uncouth-looking man, in a coarse white blouse, is tying up some espaliers. He is not, perhaps, very handy, but he is most anxious and willing, and listens to the directions of little Alice, who is standing by. Alice, by the way, is quite proud of her position as head-gardener, and issues her instructions with a pretty air of consequence, delicious to witness. As for me, I am the least industrious of the party, sitting idly upon the grass with my chin resting on my palm, and my eyes turned dreamily to the sea. Thus I stay for hours sometimes, letting the restful spirit of the place take entire possession of me—bathing my wearied senses, as it were, in the joy and sunshine of universal nature—watching the soft foam on the beach, or the ripple in the wake of the steamer, or the trembling gladness of the topmost leaf on the tall poplar tree beside our pleasant dwelling.

It is freedom now, and solitude, and sweet, sweet peace at last.

"I think, Giblets," says Alice, "that we had better prune this one before we tie it up. That bough has not a single blossom on it, and only trails along the ground."

This important *we*, and this dignified assumption of "grown-up" manners is infinitely amusing. Giblets, how-

ever, meets it in the most entire good faith. He looks upon the child as he would upon a Lilliputian princess, with boundless admiration and homage; or as Quasimodo worshipped the fairy footsteps of La Esmeralda. When she orders him about he scrambles away at his utmost speed to do her bidding. When she condescends to play with him, he is delighted. When she falls asleep in the shade or on the sofa, as she sometimes does these hot afternoons, he sits by, like a faithful dog, and watches till she wakes. Whether addressing her, or speaking of her, he always calls our Alice "the little lady."

The bough is pruned now, and tied up.

"What next, little lady?" says Giblets.

"What next? Well—really—what else did I say we would do to-day, Giblets?"

"Prune them laylocks, little lady."

"Lilacs, Giblets," says Alice, correctively.

"Laylocks," repeats the scholar with extreme humility.

Alice looks warm and rather tired. She hesitates, and taps her little foot upon the ground.

"Well, no, Giblets," she says—"I—I don't think we'll do any more gardening to-day. Suppose you go and fetch me my doll—the one with the eyes that open and shut, that Natalie gave me. Poor thing, she hasn't been out to-day! Or stay—I've changed my mind! Let's go and see if there are any more greengages ripe in the orchard!"

Giblets, who was already half-way to the house, hereupon returns, and away they go together, the capricious little mistress and her grotesque adorer.

"That transformation," says my master, looking after them with a quiet smile full of benevolence, "is the most amazing experience of my life. I contemplate it every day with increased astonishment."

"It certainly is extraordinary," I reply, "to see how short a time has sufficed for the softening of that rugged nature. We have only been here three weeks, and he has already renounced most of his old brutish propensities. At first, you know, he used to carry his food out, and hide himself among the trees to eat it. Now he takes his

meals with Sarah in the kitchen. To sleep in a bed was intolerable to him ; but he is content now with his mattress and blanket. He looks, too, quite clean and neat, and has lost that wolfish sullen expression altogether."

"Thanks to Natalie, who, somehow, found the way to his heart," said Mr. Vaughan. "Why that bullet in his leg was the greatest blessing that ever befel poor Giblets !"

"No thanks to me, my dear master," I said. "Thanks, rather, to the feeling hand that, having unwillingly sent the pain, sought instantly to soothe it, and lifted up the poor outcast of the dreary theatre into the light and life of a gentler humanity."

"He is very fond of the child," observed Mr. Vaughan, "and very tractable. I should not wonder if he got quite useful by and bye. The place here is conducive to the sort of education he requires."

"It is all harmony and sunshine," I said, reverting to my old attitude of reverie.

"The very spot in which to recover strength of body and of mind," said he, smoothing my hair kindly with his hand. "The very spot in which to cultivate hopefulness, and contentment, and courage. In which to let the remembrance of old sorrows die away, and the shadows of later irritations vanish ! Listen to what I have been reading this morning. It is a passage in 'The Excursion,' and I thought of you, my child, and marked the leaf."

I drew a little nearer and listened, and my master read aloud in the silence of the golden afternoon—

"Within the soul a faculty abides
That with interpositions, which would hide
And darken, so can deal, that they become
Contingencies of pomp ; and serve to exalt
Her native brightness. As the ample Moon,
In the deep stillness of a summer even,
Rising behind a thick and lofty grove,
Burns, like an unconsuming fire of light,
In the thick trees ; and, kindling on all sides
Their leafy umbrage, turns the dusky veil
Into a substance glorious as her own,—
Yes, with her own incorporated, by power
Capacious and serene ; like power abides

In Man's celestial spirit ; Virtue thus
Sets forth and magnifies herself ; thus feeds
A calm, a beautiful, a silent fire,
From the incumbrances of mortal life,
From error, disappointment,—nay, from guilt ;
And sometimes, so relenting Justice wills,
From palpable oppressions of Despair."

"A noble passage," I said, with a sigh, when he had concluded.

"And, as all true wisdom, preaching a fine moral of compensation," replied Mr. Vaughan. "I always feel, when reading Wordsworth, as if I were alone in a cathedral. His similes stream in upon me like the sunset through an oriel window. The echo of my own voice startles me. The sculptured angels watch about the altar ; and the organ needs but a breath to lift up its mighty voice and pray !"

There were a few moments during which neither of us spoke. The air was cooler now, and the sun was sinking fast behind the hill. Then Mr. Vaughan rose, and we loitered slowly up the sloping lawn.

"See, Natalie," said my master, "Mrs. Aylmer bows to you."

I turned, and saw our neighbour in her garden. She was gathering some flowers, and, as we approached, addressed us.

"A charming evening," she said, "and you are enjoying it after a charming manner. I have been an involuntary listener, Mr. Vaughan, to your *lecture à haute voix*. You read so distinctly that, even at this distance, I have not missed a word. You admire Wordsworth ?"

"Profoundly, Madam," replied my master.

"Then you would find a warm co-operator in Constance. For my own part, I confess that his poetry is too grave and elaborate for my taste. I read now to be amused. This is indolence, perhaps ; but, as we advance in life, we grow weary. We no longer drink in gladness with the air, and, losing the elasticity of youth, we lose two-thirds of the enjoyments of life. What wonder, then, that we require in books that which we have lost from our own

being? But I am moralising, and that is always tiresome. Will you come in and see Constance? She is not well this evening, and will be so pleased to make your better acquaintance."

My master expresses a polite acquiescence, and so, for the first time since we have been neighbours, we open the little gate of communication, and pass into the adjoining grounds.

The Aylmers are pleasant neighbours. Mrs. Aylmer is a widow, and lives here in retirement with her daughter. They are not rich, but their connexions are aristocratic. Constance is about eighteen years of age. Her health is extremely delicate. She seldom walks beyond the limits of their own grounds, and she passes all her time in reading. She is proud, too, but so well-bred, that this natural pride is seldom apparent. Mrs. Aylmer is very unlike her daughter. As she says herself, she is somewhat indolent, very good-natured, and incapable of even the shadow of *hauteur*. One sees this at a glance. Her character is written in those indulgent, calm grey eyes, and in the languid drooping of the dimpled hands. Her figure is still elegant, though inclined to *embonpoint*. She smiles whenever she speaks, and always says the kindest things in the world. One can hardly look at Mrs. Aylmer without loving her.

Passing through the grounds by the way, we enter at a French window opening on the lawn, and find ourselves in a small but elegant drawing-room. There are a thousand little elegant trifles here. Bronzes from Italy; specimens of Venetian glass; vases of Dresden porcelain; rare cabinets of ebony and tortoiseshell of the style of Louis Quatorze; graceful statuettes copied from the antique; mosaics; old Etruscan jars; fauteuils of various shapes, and mirrors in framings of carved oak. A large folio of sketches and engravings lies, half-opened, on a rosewood stand beside the window, and some exquisite landscapes, painted in water-colours, are hanging on the walls. Over the chimney-piece is suspended the full length portrait of a cavalry officer leaning on his horse. Beneath the portrait is a

small glass case, containing a silver medal—beneath the case, a sabre.

All these things I observe in a moment, while Mrs. Aylmer is speaking.

"I have brought Mr. Vaughan and his daughter to see you, Constance," she says; "and I have gathered some of the new geraniums for you."

From the time we first exchanged civilities, the Aylmers have supposed me to be Mr. Vaughan's daughter. It began in an error, and I had never corrected them. I had no wish to carry my theatrical reputation into my retirement—indeed it was better for me to remain *incognita* on account of Romani. So to them I was Alice's eldest sister, and nothing more.

"Mr. and Miss Vaughan are most welcome," said the young lady, half-rising from the sofa, and then sinking back again, as if even that exertion were too fatiguing. I take a chair beside her, and Mr. Vaughan directs his conversation to her mother.

I have seen Constance Aylmer many times already; spoken to her frequently in the garden. She is small and slight, with thin white hands, and large, brilliant brown eyes. Her hair is very dark, almost black, and waves upon her forehead. Habitually pale, she flushes now and then when speaking; but it is only for a moment. There are times when she looks almost beautiful, yet her countenance is more intellectual than beautiful, and, when she smiles, is irradiated with animation. She is very pale this evening, and coughs frequently.

Somehow our conversation turns upon art, and I discover that these drawings and sketches are the work of Miss Aylmer's own hands. They are chiefly views in Wales and Devon, and are remarkable for a breadth of outline and a daring use of colour not frequently to be seen in the attempts of an amateur. Most of the scenes, too, are of a bold, almost of a sombre character; for the most part bits of rocky coast, mountain tarns and passes, solitary ruins, or bleak lines of shore and sea.

"I think," I observed, smiling, "that I could almost

tell your favourite authors and composers from the style of your paintings."

"How so?" she asked quickly.

"Because," I replied, "individual character stamps itself more forcibly in art than in any other pursuit. A fine musician can compose in many styles; an author can write the very opposite of what he thinks; but the artist paints himself, and has no power to deceive us if he would. He cannot see Nature with any eyes but his own. She takes possession of him, not he of her; and, having so entered, he cannot dislodge, deceive, or forget her. He must do her such justice as lies in him. He must give us truth, or nothing; and, in giving us truth (that is to say, his impression, whatever that may be) he reveals his own strength, his own weakness, his own tastes, his own soul."

"Prove it," she said, flashing those bright eyes full upon me. "Prove it to me now, by these sketches."

Thus challenged, I turned over the contents of the folio, and selected two or three which best explained my argument.

The first was a scene of barren heath. In the centre rose a group of dark fantastic rocks. Far away lay the sullen sea, and over all brooded an angry sunset, barred with black lines of cloud, that seemed, as it were, to imprison the red light beyond.

"Here," I said, "is a picture that tells me much. I read in it a taste for Dante, Hoffmann, Byron, and Beddoes—Chopin, Mendelssohn, and Beethoven. For all, in short, that is powerful, mysterious, and exciting. Am I right?"

"Yes," she replied, "in a measure; and yet it is a sketch literally from nature."

"That may be; but the artist chooses those moods of nature which best accord with his taste and temper."

"Do you sketch?—you speak like an artist."

"I used to do so, abroad. I delighted in it then; but now it would serve only to recall painful associations."

"A sketch-book," observed Miss Aylmer, "is the most delightful of travelling diaries; and, if my health permitted

me to visit the Continent, where I have relations, it would be my unfailing companion. When you have once made a sketch of a place you never seem entirely to have left it. Have you travelled much, Miss Vaughan?"

"I resided for some years in Switzerland," I replied evasively, "and I have seen the Rhine; but the latter so hurriedly, and under circumstances so uncongenial, that I retain but a confused impression of it."

"Ah!" said the young lady, "you have been to Switzerland! It is the land of my dreams. I have been longing for the Alps during all the years of my life; but they say I am not yet strong enough to cross the sea. By the way, we are expecting a visitor shortly, to whom, as he is an artist, and a Swiss, I must introduce you. You will be charmed with his conversation."

"Are you speaking of the Baron, my love?" asked Mrs. Aylmer. "Ah, I thought so! He is a sculptor of rare ability, Miss Vaughan—a very poet upon marble—a man, too, of lofty principles and noble ambitions, devoted to the highest ends of art, and earnestly worshipful of all that is greatest, whether in his own walk of life, or in the paths of others. Though still a young man, he has achieved fame and honours. Last year he was elected a member of the Academy of Paris, and but a few months since he was ennobled by Louis Philippe."

"It is not frequently that art is so honoured," observed my master with a sigh.

"In England, never," replied Mrs. Aylmer. "Here the artist is patronised; abroad, he reigns."

"Probably," said my master, "your friend had powerful protectors?"

"None," interposed Miss Aylmer, with one of her sudden flushes. "None! He is self-taught and self-elevated. He began life as a poor lad. He found his way to Paris—to the Louvre. There he drank in inspiration from all that is greatest and proudest in the universe of art—there he laboured day after day, and month after month, modelling from the antique, and storing his imagination with beauty and truth. From this time the future

grew clear to him. He felt that he was also born to take his place among the noblest; and, step by step, he climbed to his present standing, alone, unaided, self-reliant!"

"A fine character," I said, "and a glorious career both past and to come. You may well speak of him so enthusiastically."

"Enthusiastically!" repeated Miss Aylmer, forcing a laugh, and flushing again, but this time more with pride than excitement. "*I* speak enthusiastically of the Baron! Indeed, you are mistaken. I admire him certainly, as a man who has elevated himself by his merit from the disadvantages of an inferior station in life—indeed, I have a high esteem for his talents, and—and disposition; but I assure you I am not in the least disposed to enthusiasm."

"And have you known him very long?"

"Not more than six or eight months," she replied indifferently. "He came over last winter from Paris, bringing to us a letter of introduction from an aunt of mine who had met with him, I think, somewhere in Rome or Florence."

"And now he is coming over again?"

Miss Aylmer bowed; the subject was dropped, and, shortly afterwards, we rose to leave. As I bade her good evening, she retained my hand for a moment in hers.

"Come and see me often," she said in a more affectionate tone than she had yet used towards me. "Come again to-morrow. I want you to try to like me. Let it be to-morrow."

It was strange, but, for the first time during many years, I dreamt that night of Laurent.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"THOSE OTHER TIMES."

FROM this time forth I became intimate with the Aylmers, and Constance somehow attached herself to me very rapidly and warmly. Hers was a high order of mind, and

a character combining many singular qualities. Her life had been passed among books. She had known little of society—still less of what generally goes by the name of pleasure. Beneath a cold exterior she concealed deeper feelings than she was willing to acknowledge even to herself. Her talents were varied and original; her style, whether in art or language, peculiarly bold. As a necessary consequence of this boldness, her views of life were liberal; yet her liberality was perpetually at war with her hereditary pride of birth. Feeling the supremacy of genius, she yet sacrificed feeling to tradition; and, in despite of her better judgment, set the claims of rank above the claims of intellect. We had many arguments about this in our daily interviews; but left off generally at the point whence we first started.

Going in one morning I found them talking gaily together, the mother and daughter. They had just received a letter, and it was lying opened on Constance's little work-table.

"You must give us this evening, Miss Vaughan," said Mrs. Aylmer. "We are anticipating an arrival."

"The Baron?"

"Yes, himself. At what hour does he say, Constance?"

Constance glanced at the letter, and said, in her coldest voice—

"About three or four o'clock, mamma, at the latest."

So it was arranged that my master and I should join them at seven. The autumnal evenings had now begun to close in, and at seven o'clock it already grew faintly dark.

We came through the little gate, and entered by the window on the lawn. A sort of dreamy reluctance possessed me. I wished to go in, and yet longed to stay out in the calm air and listen to the humming of the "grey fly" and the last notes of the birds up in the chesnut-trees. However, we went in.

There was a tall man sitting in the easy-chair that always stood by the sofa of the invalid. It was so gloomy that I could distinguish his features but imperfectly at first. He rose as we entered, and, rising, seemed to fill

the room with his presence. Involuntarily I thought of Goethe, "the magnificent youth," and a strange sensation, for which I could not account, crept over me.

Mrs. Aylmer introduced us.

"Mr. and Miss Vaughan. Monsieur le Baron von Oetiker."

How I went through the civilities of the introduction, how I found my way to a seat, how I replied to Mrs. Aylmer's words of welcome, I know not. Laurent! Laurent! the name rose to my lips—my head swam—I turned hot and cold by turns. For some moments I heard nothing, saw nothing. Taking advantage of the darkness, I leaned my forehead up against the marble chimney-piece, and pressed my hand upon my heart. Then the lights came, and, as one recovers from the effects of a fall or a heavy blow, I recovered from my dizziness. He was speaking. The tones of his voice, graver and deeper than of old, and yet the same, echoed upon my very soul, and I trembled violently. He was describing some cathedral abroad, and concluded by saying that he was, at first sight, utterly overwhelmed by the solemnity and grace of its proportions.

"Conceptions of infinite variety and harmony met me at every turn," he said, "and I found them united in the relation of countless beautifully executed parts to one great, consistent, systematic whole. I recognised there a new revelation of the simple universal laws of art. It was as if I were listening to some noble Gregorian chant, or to a chorale by Palestrina, with all its harmonies built up one above the other into a sublime unity."

"Your observation," said Constance, "reminds me of Madame de Stael. She said that architecture was frozen music."

"But Coleridge compared a Gothic cathedral to a petrified religion," interposed my master. "Is it not a fine thought?"

"Yes," replied Laurent, "the image is a grand one, for Gothic architecture is as much an expression of faith as of power. For myself, there is always something solemn and sad in the aspect of a great cathedral standing in the midst

of a busy city. Apart and silent, though hemmed in by life, it dwells like an unheeded prophet. Now and then it shakes off its proud silence and reproaches us for our neglect. Then the deep organ-breath stirs the air, and the voices of the choristers rise louder and clearer, and its melancholy bell, like a vibrating heart, knells upon the ears of the careless crowds that hurry past, reminding them of a spirit-world, and crying aloud the forgotten name of God!"

Till now I had not dared to look at him; but when he had done speaking, I lifted up my head, and, shading my own face with my hand, ventured once more to gaze upon those well-known features.

The few years which had intervened were precisely those which work most change in the external man. As a youth scarce twenty years of age I last saw him. He was then tall, slender, and boyish; and the down of the first moustache just shaded his lip. He was taller now—a man of magnificent proportions, with that breadth of chest, that aspect of ease, and power, and grace, which we commonly attribute to the Mexican hunter or the New Zealand chieftain. The bronzed tint of the mountain boy had given place to a pale olive hue, and the ample dark curls which used to fall like a mane upon his shoulders, were cut closely round the back of his neck, like those of the Farnese Hercules, and mixed in many places with the premature silver of later life. A dark short beard and thick moustache masked, but could not change, the massive moulding of the Napoleon mouth and chin. His eyes were still the same—earnest, impassioned, and serious; with the iris expanding and contracting as he spoke. The longer I looked, the less I thought him changed; and the more ready I was to pronounce each change an improvement. To a countenance of that stamp, the lines of thought on lip and brow, the sprinkling of grey hairs, the evidences of anxiety, study, and calm determination, only served to heighten every previous characteristic.

He was leaning back as he conversed, with his elbow supported on the arm of the sofa and his head resting on

his hand. A fragment of scarlet ribbon at his button-hole indicated the place where his decoration was worn. As he spoke he looked down at Constance, and Constance, lying on her couch, looked up at him. Something in his attitude, in the tones of his voice, struck me. Startled, I glanced from him to her, and saw upon her face the same expression as when, some weeks past, she related his history and afterwards denied her own enthusiasm. I closed my eyes involuntarily, and a strange pain shot through me.

When I looked up again, he was again speaking. I had lost the thread of their discourse; but after a few moments of attention I found they were discussing a question relative to art, ancient and modern. During all this time I had not spoken a word.

"I cannot think," said Constance, "why the mediæval painters gave so little attention to landscape. Early art, if I remember rightly, affords no single instance of a purely landscape painter."

"Of all the very early school, Hemelinck devoted most attention to Nature," replied Laurent; "but even in his pictures she is subordinated to the figure, or group of figures, in the foreground. The mind of that age was not receptive of the influences of landscape. In woods and waterfalls the mediæval painters beheld only the material of *background*; and so little esteem had they for the sacredness of Nature, that at times they even caricatured her fair proportions into a distorted repetition of the sentiment of the picture."

"I do not exactly follow you," said Miss Aylmer. "Illustrate your argument, Monsieur le Baron."

"I cannot better illustrate it," he replied, "than by reading you this extract from a criticism written by Hazlitt, on 'The Raising of Lazarus'—a painting by Sebastiano del Piombo. I have it copied in pencil in my pocket-book. Listen—'Too much praise cannot be given to the background—the green and white draperies of some old people in the distance, which are as airy as they are distinct—the buildings like tombs—and the different

groups and processions of figures, which seem to make life almost as grave and solemn a business as death itself.' Now, Miss Aylmer, this very artifice which the critic thinks fit to admire is precisely the thing against which I, as a reverent worshipper of Truth, enter my protestation."

"I remember to have observed something of the same contrivance in a design of Albert Durer's," I said, speaking for the first time. "The scene represents a farm-yard; and in front, feeding with the swine, kneels the prodigal son. The wanderer is wretchedly emaciated, and the very barns, trees, and farm-buildings have a gaunt and starved appearance."

At the first sound of my voice he turned in his chair, and looked at me. My face was partly averted, and where I sat the light was feeble; besides, I had nerved myself to speak, and my voice was quite calm. After a moment he sighed, and resumed his former attitude.

"I know the print of which you speak," he said, in reply, "and it corroborates my previous argument. It appears to me that a profound signification lies beneath this mannerism, and that the background corresponded with the action of the figures through a mistaken egotism, which sought on all occasions to ratify the supremacy of man in Nature. So, in the chronicles of the middle ages we find few records of the condition of land, and no apparent value for the lavish beauties of natural scenery. The history of that period is anecdotal, and a biography of heroes. It was reserved for the history and art of a later period to repair these errors. The modern historian gives us an insight into the households, the amusements, the conveniences of past centuries. He shows us the condition of morals and the degrees of knowledge. He sketches in panoramic language the landscape as it changed from marsh and forest to field and fallow. He measures the cycles as much by their landmarks on the national mind as by the bloody record of battle-field and treason. So, also, is it for the modern artist to recognise the sublime truth of 'God in Nature!'—to read us off the poetry of

valley and mountain, and to cheat with glimpses of green solitudes the toil-worn dweller in cities. Is there not something more in this than the mere craving for novelty? Have we not grown less slavish, and cast off the indignity of hero-worship? The Leader is now a man of mark by virtue of his office. He is great because those are great who follow him. He is the type, not the exception. He has found his level in creation, and has become the foreground figure, which no longer usurps the interest of the scene, but without which the landscape would look cold and desolate. Early art, like early history, was dramatic. Mediæval man was the hero of this globe. The sun and moon were hung in the heavens to light his footsteps—the earth brought forth grain for his sustenance—the birds sang for him, and for him the bee gathered honey. Modern man, seen by the light of science and stripped of his self-bestowed royalty, is but an actor in the great drama, and by no means the lordly spectator he had fancied himself to be. The scene, it is true, would be incomplete without him; but every day steals something from the measure of his height, and proves to him the unwelcome fact that creation has wonders as wonderful as himself. He is as necessary to the earth and the air, as the earth and the air are necessary to him. The soil yields him fruit—the fragments of his body and the lime of his bones manure the soil. The tree gives him shelter and food—the carbonic acid gas thrown off from his lungs is the life of the tree. The plant is dependent upon the animal—the animal upon the plant. And herein a great moral and historical truth is developed. But I have wandered far enough from Miss Aylmer's first question, as to why landscape painting was unappreciated in the middle ages."

"You have replied to it very eloquently and fully," said Constance, with a glance full of admiration. "Though, at the same time, it seems to me that your theory is somewhat derogatory to the just dignity of mankind. You deny that man is the monarch of creation."

"Entirely. Nature can own but one king—her Creator. Nature is the associate, not the slave of man, and man is

the reasonable and labouring dweller in Nature. Both are alike the work of a Supreme Intelligence; and what right have we to presume that either is greater or lesser than the other?"

My noble Laurent! his voice was so resonant and his expression so fine as he said this! Presently he bent his glorious head towards Constance, and said more gently—

"Miss Aylmer, I fear, cannot agree with me."

The bright eyes flashed up at him, and she laughed aloud; but the glance and the laugh were alike satirical.

"I confess," she said, "that I prefer to see more difference between a man and a vegetable than seems apparent to Monsieur le Baron."

Laurent smiled, the conversation flowed into other channels, and Mrs. Aylmer proposed some music.

"Do sing to us, Natalie," said Constance. She called me Natalie now.

Laurent turned again, very hastily, and looked at me.

"Pray excuse me to-night," I pleaded. "I am quite out of voice and practice."

"Just one little ballad, dear. Only one, to please me!"

It was not often that Constance so entreated, therefore I rose, and said I would please her if I could. As I crossed over to the piano, Laurent followed me with his eyes, and I heard him whisper to her—

"Who is that lady?"

"Our neighbour, Miss Vaughan, daughter to Mr. Vaughan yonder."

"An Englishwoman?"

"Yes, but educated chiefly abroad. Her father is an admirable musician, and has just composed a successful opera."

Again Laurent looked at me, and again he sighed and turned away. My heart fluttered so that I could scarcely breathe, and I preluded for several moments before I could trust myself to begin. By and bye I glided into a plaintive key, and sang these words, which I had one day written to an air composed by Mr. Vaughan—

"THOSE OTHER TIMES."*

"Those other times! those other times!
That dream of passion past and o'er!
Can other times and other climes
Come back once more?
So sweet, so sad, so long gone by,
Remember'd only with a sigh
In my sad rhymes!
"Those other times! those other times!
They chain me with their backward spells!
Once more I hear the airy chimes
Of village bells!
Once more that voice so long unheard
Whispers my name, and blends the word
With my sad rhymes!"

When I concluded, I looked at Laurent. He had covered his face with his hand, and remained for a long time silent.

Then Mr. Vaughan played, and shortly after that we rose and wished good-night. I went homeward like one dreaming. The yellow harvest-moon seemed to rest upon the belt of trees crowning the hill, and the sea was obscured by a white mist.

"That sculptor is a remarkable man," observed my master; but I made no reply. At the door of our own cottage we were met by the servant.

"Oh, if you please, sir," she said, "there is something the matter with Giblets. He has been going on so strangely for the last two hours."

"With Giblets!" echoed my master. "Why, what is it?"

"Indeed, sir, I don't know," replied the girl. "He was out somewhere in the afternoon, and he came back about two hours ago like a daft creature—not as I know that he was ever anything otherwise. He's lying on his bed now."

My master took the light from her hand, and went upstairs. Presently he called to me to follow. Giblets

* The words of this song are copyright, and form part of Miss J. St. George's Dramatic Entertainment, entitled "Home and Foreign Lyrics," written by Amelia B. Edwards. The music composed by J. F. Duggan, Esq. Just published.

was lying upon the bed in his clothes, with his face buried in the pillow, moaning and chattering to himself, and tossing uneasily from side to side.

"Giblets," I said, kneeling down beside him. "Giblets! speak to me." But he only shuddered.

"Giblets, what is the matter with you?"

Still he hid his face, and, seeming neither to hear or see us, kept muttering to himself.

"Hush!" said my master. "Can you hear anything of what he says?"

I bent lower still, and listened.

"Let me be!" he said. "Let me be! What do you want of me? Where do you come from?—I'm happy here—I'm very happy here—Let me be! Don't look at me so—I'm afraid of you—Curse you! don't look at me so! I hate you—I tell you I hate you! Where are they? Take her away—Don't let her speak to me! Don't let her touch me!—Keep her off, I say!—Keep her off!—Curse her! curse her! curse her! Why will she follow me? Master! little lady! Miss Natalie! Where are you all? Why don't you save me? Oh, keep her away—keep her away from me, master!"

Mr. Vaughan shrugged his shoulders.

"He fancies something—has dreamt something," he said. "Come away, Natalie. He will forget it to-morrow."

Troubled and anxious, I follow Mr. Vaughan from the room, and, bidding him good-night, retire to my own chamber. I do not feel so sure that Giblets will forget it to-morrow, and, somehow, his broken sentences keep coming back and back to me, and fill me with a vague disquiet.

And Laurent, my kingly Laurent, what of him? Does he love Constance? I know not. His manner to her is gentle and deferential; but it does not seem to me quite the manner of a lover. Does Constance love him? I will find out. That something in my voice and countenance struck him I am convinced. How he started when he heard her call me by my name! How he turned and looked at me when I first spoke! Still, he deems all but the strangeness of coincidence. He cannot recognise

Natalie Metz in Natalie Vaughan; and I, too, have changed since we parted!

That night, before I go to rest, I take down my little Joan of Arc and contemplate it long and earnestly. I was robbed of his letter on the day of my first arrival in London, but there is one line of it which I have never forgotten—

“I go that I may become worthier of myself and of you. Farewell!”

Has he forgotten those words?

CHAPTER XL.

THE SHADOW AMONG THE POPLARS.

I DEBATED it with myself for many days, and every day the effort became more difficult. At last I resolved not to tell him, or, at all events, to keep silence till I knew beyond a doubt whether she really loved him. If she did, and if— if he loved her, to what end should I reveal myself? What right had I to trouble the peaceful current of their happiness? And I should trouble it; for he remembers, and once he loved me!

Yes—I know he loved me. I had not learnt then to prize him. I even forgot him for awhile, and loved with a girlish love one to whom I could never have been united. He has heard of this, most probably. Perhaps, having heard it, he has even grown indifferent to me. Besides, were that not the case, so many years have passed, so many events have happened, so much has been done, and suffered, and forgotten since then! Ah me! it is all over now, and, to them, at least, I will be Natalie Vaughan evermore.

Still it is hard to see him, hear him every day, and know that I have lost him utterly! He is so earnest—so clever—so temperate, and gentlemanly, and just! I could listen to him from morning till night, and from night again till morning, as he sits beside her sofa,

pouring forth all the treasures of his reading and all the poetry of his deep heart. They wonder why I am always so silent; but I cannot speak in his presence, and I am well content to sit passively by, and store up every word and every gesture.

He never heeds me, except when Constance forces me to join in now and then with their conversation. He is always courteous to me, it is true, and often, when I am singing, seems to be overpowered by emotion; but he has ceased to look round when I speak, and he has forgotten the curiosity with which I at first inspired him. I am to him a quiet stranger with a good voice, and nothing more. He even wonders, perhaps, what it was that startled him that night. Time and much sorrow, privation, mental suffering, late hours, and the toil of a public life, have changed me also. My cheek is blanched, and mine eye hath lost the careless fire of sixteen. I am taller, too; I wear my hair differently; I dress richly; I possess accomplishments which were unknown to me then; and, above all, I am Miss Vaughan!

How should he recognise me? How can he recognise me without I make myself known to him? Oh, it is a temptation—a bitter temptation—but I am brave, and overcome it.

* * * * *

I am sitting with Constance by the open window, and the rest are strolling in the garden after tea. Oh these glorious autumn nights! how voluptuously warm and lulling are they! How the rich moonlight seems to lie along the tired earth, like Diana bending over her sleeping shepherd, and how the little birds wake up now and then in their nests, and chirp a last good-night to the pleasant earth! Yonder they stand by the rose-trees, Mrs. Aylmer, my master, and Laurent. He is speaking, and, though I cannot distinguish his words, the deep tones of his voice penetrate the stillness of the night air and are wafted to us by the breeze.

"How he towers above them in the dusk!" I murmur involuntarily.

"Yes," replies Constance, following him with her eyes; "nature has made of him a prince and a poet."

I turned, and looked into her eyes. She crimsoned all over, neck and brow, and averted her face.

"Constance," I said, taking her two hands in mine, "you love Von Oetiker."

She shook her head, and tried to force a laugh; but her lip quivered, and her eyes filled up with tears.

"Nay, Constance, dear Constance, he is worthy of any woman's heart—none worthier! Why deny that you love him? I am right, dear, am I not?"

"You—you are indeed wrong," she faltered. "The— the Baron—our positions are so different . . ."

"But he has genius—education—rank!"

"Rank!" she repeated with a scornful smile. "Rank! a mere decoration of merit! a foreign ribbon! a toy! Natalie, there is no blood in England nobler and older than ours!"

"But what has that to say to it?"

"Everything!" she replied proudly. "I could never stoop to love!"

Her eyes glittered, her whole face glowed with animation as she said this. Then, as if her heart and judgment were at war together, she looked back at Laurent in the garden, burst into a passion of tears, and buried her face in the sofa cushions.

I twined my arms round her—I kissed her hands, her hair, her cheeks—I tried to console and soothe her, though the hot tears were gathering in my eyes, and my own heart was aching all the time.

"Oh, Constance, confide in me! Let me, at least, share your sorrows. You do love him, Constance, you do love him after all! And he loves you also, does he not? Tell me, dear, has he—has he ever said he loves you?"

She dashed the tears angrily from her cheek, and struggled to be calm.

"I am ashamed of this—this weakness," she said, impetuously. "It shall not happen again."

She evaded my question; but I persisted still. Did not my own peace hang upon her answer?

"Confess that you love him, and that he loves you! Constance, *you must tell me!*"

I could feel her trembling as she lay there.

"Spare me, Natalie," she said, brokenly. "Spare my pride."

"No, no, no!" I cried, passionately. "I must have it! Has he said he loves you?"

"Never."

"But he implies it?"

"I—I have sometimes thought so," she said. "He spoke to me once of having—of having . . ."

"Of having loved before?"

Constance bent her head.

I could scarcely breathe. I rose, and leaned out into the cool air, and put up a silent prayer for strength—for strength to be generous, and unselfish, and brave.

"She loves him! she loves him!" I said in my heart. "She is worthier, and fairer, and nobler than I! To a love like hers pride itself must give way at last, and then he too will be happy!"

And so I triumphed again; and coming back quite calmly, sat down beside her just as the others returned.

"Not a word of what we have said to-night," said Constance, in a whisper. I pressed her hand for reply, and there it ended.

Whether it was the unaccustomed emotion, or the night-air blowing coldly upon her as she lay there by the window, I know not; but she coughed this evening more than usual, and pressed her hand frequently to her side.

"You look pale to-night, Miss Aylmer," said Laurent, coming up with an expression of concern upon his face. "Let me close this window."

"I am not cold, Monsieur le Baron," she replied.

"Nay, but you cough, and the night-air is dangerous. I must insist upon being permitted to take care of you—since you will not take care of yourself. Ah! what's that?"

His hand was on the sash as he said this. Following the direction of his eyes, I saw what seemed to be a shadow under the trees at the end of the garden. Even as I caught

it, it was gone, and there was only the white moonlight in the place of it.

"Pshaw! it was nothing!" said Laurent, shrugging his shoulders, and drawing the curtains. "The shadow of some bough waving in the wind. But tell me, Miss Aylmer, are you frequently troubled with that cough?"

"I had it terribly when a child," she replied, "and it was on that account that we came to live on this warm south coast. But I have been much better for some years, and I mean soon to get quite well. I fancy, however," and here she smiled and sighed together, "that of late it has been gaining upon me afresh."

"I hope not," said he, bending anxiously over her. "I hope not!"

"And I hope not also," she answered, languidly. "But let us forget that. To-day is our own!"

"How can I forget, when I know that you suffer?" murmured Laurent, as he arranged the cushions beneath her head.

I could not bear to witness how he tended her, and I was enraged at myself at the same time for the unworthy impulse. I pleaded a headache, and took my leave; but Mr. Vaughan, who had begun a game of chess with Mrs. Aylmer, remained behind. The little gate of communication by which we generally passed from house to house was at the farthest extremity of the garden, and thither I now bent my steps. Arriving at it, I paused awhile to enjoy the beauty of the night. Yonder slept the sea under the silver veil of the moonlight—waveless and calm as a mountain lake. Just beneath the cliff lay a single ship at anchor. Not a sound, not a rustle disturbed the living silence; and overhead were the stars.

The gentleness of the scene entered into my soul, and I felt happier and better. I opened the little gate, and slowly, slowly took my way towards the cottage, thinking of Constance and Laurent, and threading the shade of the poplars.

"Natalie!" said a suppressed voice, close behind me.

My heart stood still. Trembling, I turned and saw a

dark figure step forward from among the trees. Despite the folds of the long cloak, I recognised him instantly.

—Romani!

“Natalie! Natalie! At length I have found thee!”

He advanced as if to embrace me; but I shrank back shudderingly.

“What do you want of me, Signor Romani?” I faltered.

“Why—why have you followed me?”

“Why have I followed you?” he repeated, passionately.

“Why have I followed you, Natalie? Because I love you! Because I am dying—dying—dying for you! Look at me! See how I have wasted and paled beneath this consuming fire! See these channels worn by my tears! Have you no pity, no human pity, in that woman’s breast? Must I lie here and die on the grass at your feet? Oh, speak to me! look at me! Love me—love me, *Angiola mia!*”

He had thrown himself down before me, and, as he uttered these words, flung his arms upwards, with a fierce gesture, half threat and half entreaty. I began to be seriously alarmed.

“I have answered this before,” I said, striving to speak calmly. “I have told you over and over again, Signor Romani, that these protestations only grieve me, and— and are unavailing. Pray leave me—leave me in peace. It is not generous—it is not kind! You know I can never love you!” ●

He sprang to his feet with a wild cry.

“What! never, never, never!” he said, in a strange tone, that thrilled me with fear. “It is then as I feared! You are one of them! You are a fiend! You are a spirit! Yes—” and here he dropped his voice to a whisper —“You come to tempt me—to torment me—to drive me mad—mad! But no—I know you now. You shall not have power over me—I’ll—I’ll—My God! what am I saying? Oh, Natalie! Natalie! what shall I do?”

He covered his face with his hands. He trembled from head to foot. Presently his whole manner changed, and he seized me by the arm.

"Tell me, at least," he said, in a determined voice, "that I have no rival! Speak! for I will know it."

It seemed to be my only chance.

"You are right," I said, in desperation. "I love another."

I would have given worlds to have been able to recall it the next moment. His whole frame seemed to dilate with rage, and he shook his clenched hands savagely.

"Another! another!" he cried with quivering lips. "You love another! Listen to me, then. I will discover who he is—where he is! I will tear him limb from limb! I will cut his heart out! He shall die—do you hear me? He shall die slowly, lingeringly, cruelly! I will have no mercy! I am an Italian, and I will have an Italian vengeance! As for you, Natalie—as for you, *you shall be mine!* Neither heaven nor hell shall stand between Silvio Romani's love or hatred!"

A maniacal fury blazed in his eyes as he said this, and again he advanced towards me. I sprang back, and a cry of terror escaped me.

"Help! Laurent! Help!"

There was a sound of rapid footsteps—a crash of parting boughs—a leap—and Laurent stood beside me!

"Great God!" he said, supporting me in his arms. "Are you hurt?"

But I could only point to the flying figure now scaling the fence at the end of the garden.

"Are you afraid to be left here for a moment?"

I shook my head, and he darted off in pursuit. After a few moments he came back again.

It was useless! He was already half way across the meadow, and by this time has reached the shore. Do you know who it was?"

"Perfectly."

"And his motive in alarming you?"

I tried to smile, but the effort failed.

"It is an old persecution, Monsieur le Baron," I said.

"I came here, as I thought, to escape it; but I must now seek some other retreat."

He gazed at me with an earnest solicitude that repaid

all I had suffered, and offered his arm in silence to conduct me to the house. At the door he paused. It might be the effect of the moonlight, but I thought that he looked paler than usual.

"Is there anything farther that I can do?" he asked.

"Nothing, thank you," I replied, "unless you will request Mr. Vaughan to return home. Did he hear me, do you think?"

Laurent looked at me again, more earnestly than before.

"No one heard you but myself," he replied. "To tell you the truth, I felt uneasy, and I had made an excuse to leave the room, that I might listen in the garden till I knew you were safe at home. I felt sure I had seen a shadow among the poplars as I closed the window."

"What should I have done," said I, gratefully, "if you had not been there, Monsieur le Baron?"

"Nay," he rejoined, "I was just turning away when I heard you call for . . . for help."

And again he looked at me. This time I knew what he meant, and I resolved not to betray myself.

"I thank you very much, Monsieur," I said, bowing, and disengaging my hand from his arm. "You will have the kindness to tell what has happened to my . . . my father. Good night."

A singular expression passed over his face—an expression of weariness—of sorrow—of disappointment. He sighed, and bowed profoundly.

"Good night, Mademoiselle."

Standing by the window, and looking back at the stately figure crossing the lawn, I press my hand to my brow, and can no longer restrain my tears. Did he hear me call upon his name in my extremity of fear? Did he once more doubt, once more suspect me? What was that emotion in his eyes, that pallor on his face, that tremor in his voice?

And see!—even now he pauses by the little gate, and looks back at the house, as if he were unwilling to leave me!

CHAPTER XLI.

WESTWARD HO!

I WAS ill for some days after this, and I recovered the shock but slowly. More than a week elapsed before I had strength or courage enough to venture upon a visit to the Aylmers, and, when I went, I chose the morning, hoping that Laurent might be out.

I found Constance more weak and flushed than usual. She was lying upon her sofa, wrapped in a warm shawl, as if it had been winter, and supported by pillows.

"Mamma and Monsieur von Oetiker are out," she said, with a faint smile, "and I was just wishing for you, dearest Natalie. Our aunt and cousin from abroad are with us. They arrived yesterday quite unexpectedly from Paris, and came straightway here; and now they are all out enjoying this lovely sunshine on the beach."

"Is that the aunt who introduced you to the Baron?"

"The same. But tell me, Natalie, are you better?"

"Oh, yes," I said, cheerfully, "I am much better. It was but a fright after all. And you, Constance?"

She shook her head.

"My cough gets worse daily," she said, "and I am much weaker, even since we last met. I shall not be long with you, dear!"

"Oh, Constance!"

She lay back with a sigh, and closed her eyes.

"I own," she said, "that I am unwilling to believe it—more unwilling now than ever. Life is very sweet, Natalie, and I had but just begun to prize it."

"You will live," I said, eagerly. "You will live, and be very happy with—with him you love."

"Oh," she murmured, sorrowfully, "what is love to me? What is love, or pride of birth, or hope worth now? These last few weeks have changed me more than you think for, Natalie. Mamma neither sees or suspects it; but look!"

She held her hand up to the light, and I was shocked to see how transparently thin it had become.

"I have been proud, Natalie," she continued. "I have been wayward. That is over now, for I feel that every day steals something from my term of life. Nay, do not weep, dear friend. I shall soon be reconciled to it. I have not yet schooled myself to part with all I love; but I shall learn contentment ere long."

"It cannot be," I sobbed. "It cannot be!"

"Indeed it is," she said. "I closed my eyes upon it for a long time, dear; but it has gained upon me so suddenly at the last that I can deny it no longer. How short a time I seem to have lived, and how swiftly the days have gone by! Life is like a panorama, and we the spectators for whose amusement it is played off. Scenes, events, people pass before us as upon a canvas, and we fancy all the time that we are standing still. It is not till the performance comes to a close that we find it is we who have been moving all the time. We have passed through life—life has not passed before us. The years have glided away whilst we were occupied in watching the glorious drama, and the hour has come at last when darkness gathers round, and we must fall asleep."

We were both silent for several minutes after this. At length Constance recommenced the conversation.

"I think, Natalie," she said, "that you will like my aunt and cousin. They have so much to tell, for they have been travelling incessantly during the last few years, and have seen everything between the Apennines and the Pyrenees. My cousin, they tell me, is engaged to an Italian princess. He is still a mere boy; but it is not the first time he has been in love for all that! His story is quite a romance, and I will tell you all about it some day. Hush! they come."

There were voices in the garden, and footsteps on the gravel path. The voices were distant; the footsteps rapid, and close by. In a moment the light was obscured, the window opened from without, and Laurent sprang into the room.

Seeing me, he started back, and changed colour.

"Miss Vaughan here!" he said hastily, glancing from me to the garden, and then back again. "I—I may be permitted to offer my congratulations on your recovery, Mademoiselle."

"You seem flurried, Monsieur le Baron," said Constance, turning those inquiring eyes full upon him.

"I have been running," he replied. Then, looking fixedly at me, he added—"We have been teasing your cousin Louis about his Italian princess, and he chased me for it all across the meadows."

Her cousin Louis!

"Poor Louis," said Constance, smiling. "We have given him no peace ever since he came! Have you found out her name yet?"

"I think it is Bianca; but Mrs. Aylmer has, doubtless, by this time, learned it from Madame de Wald."

Madame de Wald! Louis!

I felt myself turn hot and cold—the room swam round—I could hardly stand. Still Laurent never removed his eyes from my face, and all this time the voices in the garden drew nearer.

"See," he said, pointing suddenly to the lawn, and bending almost to the level of my face, "see! Here comes Louis in pursuit!"

I thought I should have fallen; but, half-fainting, strove to reach the door. Laurent was instantly by my side.

"You are ill," he said. "You are ill, Miss Vaughan! Shall I assist you from the room?"

"What is the matter?" cried Constance, rising from her sofa.

"Oh, let me go!" I murmured. "For pity, let me go!"

He took me up in his strong arms as if I had been a child, and, as Louis entered by the window, bore me out at the door.

"Fear not, Natalie!" he whispered. "Fear not! Shall I take you home by the front way?"

I bowed my head, for I was unable to speak, and he

carried me into the open air, oh, so tenderly! Once out in the road, I felt better.

"Stop," I said; "I think I can walk now."

"No, no, no," he replied, drawing me closer to his breast; "let me hold you in my arms—let me hold you, dearest! Ah, Natalie! I knew you, my love! I knew you from the first, and it is so long since we have been parted!"

He kissed me on the forehead and on the lips—he pressed me to his heart—he seemed half delirious with joy.

"How could you try to deceive me—me, Natalie? And you knew all the time how passionately I loved you! Why, darling, I have loved you, loved you, loved you all my life! Oh, this is too much happiness!"

We had by this time arrived at the cottage door. He placed me gently on the bench in the porch, and bent fondly over me.

"Look at me, Natalie!" he said. "Look at me! see all that I have become for your sake—all that I have suffered—all that I have achieved! I have won my way, dear, from poverty to affluence, from obscurity to fame, from my mean estate to rank—rank, even—for the love of you! I never won a prize, or received an honour, or finished an undertaking in my art, but I looked forward to your smile as to something more precious than all! You do not love me—perhaps you never may love me; but you have been my star, my guide, my life, my hope, and only to have felt this is a blessing!"

He covered my hands with kisses, for I was weak and passive now, and scarcely conscious of anything but his presence.

"I know that you have never thought of me," he continued. "I know, even, that you gave to Louis what I would have died to win. I see,"—and here his voice faltered—"I see that . . . that you have not yet forgotten him. Nay! deny it not, beloved, for I can bear it. The time, perchance, may arrive when . . . when this remembrance shall have worn away; and till then I will trouble you no more. You will still be, as you have ever been, the only happiness, the only sorrow of my life; and, if I have wearied you with my love, forgive me, for it is the last

time. Lost wert thou, dearest, and found, and lost again ! Farewell. Till you summon me, you will see me no more."

He stood looking at me—I had no power to speak : he kissed me once more on the lips—and was gone !

I went up to my chamber and threw myself upon the bed. It seemed like a dream to me, and yet I saw it all so clearly now ! Mrs. Aylmer, then, was the sister of Madame de Wald—the sister who married the officer who fell in battle—the sister who lived in retirement, and to whose care I was to have been confided ! Here, at this quiet sea-side spot, I should have spent the years passed beneath Mr. Vaughan's roof. I should have known neither danger, privation, nor success. What a marvellous change had been worked by the loss of that one letter ! What a difference between Natalie the dependent and Natalie the *prima donna* ! Louis here, too—within a few yards of me— and Madame, Madame who cast me off so utterly, after I had sacrificed all to my obedience for her !

I feel as if I were awake and asleep at the same time, and it is long before I can compose myself to a resolute contemplation of what is best to be done.

Laurent still loves me ! . . . but Constance loves Laurent, and he believes that I am indifferent to him still. Louis is here . . . but that dream has faded from me long ago, and he is betrothed to a lady loftier even in station than himself. Herein Madame is satisfied, and he, doubtless, is happy. Romani has discovered my retreat, and will surround me, as of old, with threats and terrors. Looking calmly at all these things (as I at last succeed in looking at them), it becomes evident to me that one only course remains. One course, honourable and generous, and alike worthy of myself and those I love.

I must go.

It is hard ; but I must go, and Heaven will grant me a strength proportioned to the task ! Before he recognised me I had resolved to keep my secret and promote her happiness, if I could ; and shall this accident make me less generous ? It is but one effort more, and I resolve to make it.

"Natalie, darling," says a childish voice outside my door ; "are you not coming down ?"

"Yes, Alice, directly. Where is papa?"

"Papa is writing in his study."

I get up and open my door, and, taking the little girl by the hand, go down into the study.

"Now, Alice, go and play in the garden for a few minutes till I come. I wish to speak to papa."

My voice is quite cheerful and calm; but, for all that, Mr. Vaughan looks up hastily, and lays his pen aside.

"What is the matter, Natalie? What has happened?"

"Nothing is the matter," I reply, "but something strange has happened this morning. Madame de Wald and her son are next door."

"At Mrs. Aylmer's?"

"At Mrs. Aylmer's."

"Well—and what are you going to do? Have you seen them?"

"I do not wish to see them. Madame can—can have no desire to meet me, and Louis I prefer to avoid. Taking this into consideration, together with the reappearance of Signor Romani, I—I wish, my dear master, to leave this place."

Mr. Vaughan looks uneasy and vexed, but I continue.

"If we stay here I must risk encountering them at every turn. I must even cease to visit with our neighbours. Romani will persecute me again with his importunities, and I—I—"

I thought of Laurent and Constance, and was silent.

"Well, Natalie," said my master, "what course do you propose?"

"Let me go back to my artist-life!" I replied, eagerly.

"Let me go back to the stage, away from all who have once known me! There—there alone is forgetfulness and freedom!"

"You forget that you will be exposing yourself more than ever to the folly and insolence of that Italian."

"On the contrary. I have a plan by which to escape him. I will go to America."

"To America!" repeated Mr. Vaughan.

"I do not ask you to accompany me, my dear master; but I feel that it will be better for me—better in every

way for my peace. All that I entreat of you is, to aid me in my project. You will do this for me I am sure."

"If you go, Natalie," said my master, rising with an air of quiet determination, "I will go with you. Hush! I will hear nothing more. My resolution is taken. I shall do as well in New York as in London. I can compose as well in New York as in London. Little Alice will be as happy in New York as in London. As for you, you will make a fortune—and you deserve to make it. I will write immediately to a ship-agent, and have our passage booked; and to our landlord, to let the house in town. We will leave here to-morrow evening by the coach. It is all settled, Natalie; and now, Westward ho!"

CHAPTER XLII.

THE LONE HOUSE BY THE SEA.

I HAD not slept all night. I saw the day break over the misty sea, and the fishing-boats come in. I had learned to love the place, and that night I was to leave it, perhaps never to return again! I longed once more to wander down by the beach. I was feverish, and my temples throbbed with long watching. Surely, as it was so early, I might venture out without the chance of meeting any one. At all events, I could not resist the temptation, and I went.

The tide was down, and had left a wide marge of black and rocky ooze, clothed in a vesture of seaweeds, and islanded here and there by broad pools that glittered in the morning sun. To the right, just where a jutting fragment of the cliff shut in our little bay, the fishermen were unlading and drawing up their boats. All around rose the green hills. Scarce a breath was stirring, and at every window in Mrs. Aylmer's house the blinds were down.

The expression of perfect rest on all the scene did me good, and the gentle sighing of the waves upon the shore chimed in with my dreamy mood. All at once a patter-

ing of little feet upon the sands, and a shrill whining voice close at my elbow, broke in upon my reverie.

"Got a copper, lady? I'm so hungry! Mother's dying! Had no food since yesterday morning!"

It was a tiny, stunted child, about six or seven years of age—a dirty, pallid, half-clad urchin, such as I might have expected to see upon a London crossing, but never in a place like this. His face looked sharp, and cunning, and old, and his voice was attuned to the true mendicant key. He had been up to the house for charity of late, and I remembered him instantly. As I stopped and looked at him, remarking all this, he held out his hand (such an old, begging little hand!) shuffled his feet uneasily, and repeated the same whining cry—"so hungry!"

"You have been at the cottage, have you not?" I asked, pointing towards my home. "I think I have seen you there every day for the last week at least."

"Yes, lady"—still holding out the hand—"do come and see mother!—she's dying!"

"Where do you live?"

"Down the beach, lady."

"Have you always lived there?"

The boy looked up at me sharply, and hesitated. I repeated the question.

"Yes, lady; always."

Somehow I doubted him, and the bright eyes looked so searching. One of them, too, was half obscured by a drooping eyelid. I thought of Mrs. Jones, and the coincidence brought an involuntary shudder.

"What is your father?"

"Got no father, lady. Got five little brothers and sisters. Mother's dying. We're all so hungry—so hungry!"

"Well, what is your mother's name?"

"Mother's name's Martin, and she's dying."

"How am I to know that you are telling me the truth?"

"Come and see mother, lady! It's just beyond the village. Got five little brothers and sisters, and father's dead. Do come, lady! Do come!"

He ran on a little way, and beckoned to me to follow.

A strange reluctance possessed me, and after I had gone a few steps I paused.

"How far is it, boy?" I asked.

"Only a little way. Just round there, out of sight."

And again he ran on in advance, and I followed. Two or three times I spoke to him after this; but to all my questions he gave the same answers.—His father was dead. He had five brothers and sisters. His mother was dying, and they were all "so hungry!" The story might be true. In London I should have doubted him; but in this country place it must surely be true. Still, he seemed to repeat it like a lesson got by heart, and, in spite of myself, I could not help feeling uneasy.

I followed him all along the beach, and past the fishermen's huts, where the men were busy at their boats. Some of them gave me a "good morning," and one old weather-beaten sailor shook his fist threateningly at the boy, and called him a "thieving young dog!" as we went by. I scarcely noticed it at the moment, but it came back to me afterwards—when it was too late. When I found that we had left the village behind us, and that he still ran on, I began to repent of my expedition.

"How much farther have we to go, child?"

"Just round that bit of rock there!" he answered, with a saucy air, tossing up his greasy cap, catching it again, stopping every now and then to fling a pebble into the sea, and altogether dropping his former whining civility. As we neared the great boulder to which he pointed, he sprang forward—scrambled up by some bushes—put his fingers into his mouth, and gave a prolonged whistle.

"Why do you do that?" I asked, hastily.

But he only looked at me, beckoned, jumped down, and led the way along a narrow footpath that skirted the base of the rock.

Turning the angle, I see a tract of bare shore—a line of low and broken cliffs, with a waste of desolate heath beyond—an old dilapidated boat drawn up under the rocks, and a rusty anchor half-buried in the sands. It is a dreary scene, and I get strangely nervous.

"I see no house here, boy! I will go no farther."

He stops and points to what seems at this distance to be a stack of furze piled in a cleft of chalk, a few yards up the beach. Drawing nearer, I find that it really is a house built up against the cliff, thatched with dried heath and fragments of old timbers, and plastered over with mud and lime. Most of the windows are gone, and those on the ground-floor are closed with heavy wooden shutters. The door, however, stands open, and the boy runs in first.

"All right! Come along in and wait here, while I go and tell mother."

I enter a door opening out of the gloomy passage, and find myself in a bare, dark chamber that has, apparently, been disused for years. The shutters are nailed to the sashes, and all the light that struggles in filters through the cracks. As my eyes get used to the obscurity, I distinguish a heap of straw up at one end—a pile of laths and lumber—and a single chair. I hear the boy's footsteps clatter along the passage, and then there is a stillness of death.

Some minutes pass thus, and my nervousness increases. At last, weary of waiting, I resolve to search the house; for somehow I feel persuaded that there is no one in it but myself. Going over to the door in pursuance of this plan, I find it fastened on the outside, and myself a prisoner!

Is it possible that I have fallen into a trap?

Utterly overwhelmed for the moment, I turn quite cold and dumb, like a statue; then, waking suddenly to the full sense of horror and apprehension, shake the door violently on its hinges—beat upon the panels with my clenched hands till the knuckles are bruised and bleeding—cry aloud for help and freedom, and fill the lonely house with clamorous echoes!

Alas! alas! not a sound—not a sound in reply! Nothing but solitude, imprisonment, and darkness!

After persisting for a long while—after giving up, and coming back two or three times over—after having spent my breath, my strength, my tears, in vain, I fling myself in despair upon the pile of straw, and give way to the bitterest despondency.

Oh, my dear master—my little Alice—what will you think and fear? Shall I ever see you again? Am I to be murdered, or, more terrible still!—to be left here till I starve? Then that boy! He has been lingering about the house for days, watching, most probably, for this opportunity! Fool that I was to trust him! Fool that I was not to read the warning written by nature on that cunning brow! But it is too late now!—too late! and I am betrayed, helpless, and alone!

Inspired by a sudden hope, I mount upon the chair, and try the shutters. They are nailed up with great iron nails, and I only lacerate my fingers in vain. And all this time the sunlight filtering through the chinks grows brighter and brighter, and travels imperceptibly from left to right, as the day mounts to its noon.

Thus long hours go by, and I get faint with hunger and sick at heart. They are searching for me—lamenting over me by this time! My master, most probably, has sought out Laurent to aid him. Perhaps they may be near me at this moment—may pass by, and leave me here! This last thought is worst of all, and once more, in the blind rage and impotence of ungovernable terror, I fly to the door, fling myself against it, reckless of pain or bruises, call wildly on the names of those I love, and sink down at last across the threshold in an agony of weeping!

By degrees the deep sobs come more rarely, and are succeeded after a while by a heavy languor. Then I drag myself painfully across the floor, and back to the straw-heap where I lay before; and still the golden thread travels from left to right, and the weary day bends westward!

It seems to me that I must have fallen asleep at this time, for I can remember nothing farther, till footsteps trampling heavily along the beach, just under the windows, arouse me. Waking up in that heavy bewilderment which belongs to distress of mind, I find that it is dusk, and cannot conceive at first where I am. Then my hand encounters the straw, and I remember all! My first impulse is to cry again for help—my second, to listen and lie still.

Now the footsteps come along the passage, and, passing

by the door, go on to the end, and die away. There are, apparently, many men, for still they keep trampling under the windows and entering the passage—and now, hark! they drag some heavy weight along the ground, and whisper hoarsely among themselves!

I cannot catch their words, though I creep nearer, and hold my breath to listen. A cold shudder runs through me. I have heard of dens in lonely places—of gangs of thieves and murderers—of midnight burials. . . . Good Heavens! the noises—the noises underground!

It is no deception of the senses! They are now beneath the flooring of the room—under my very feet—and still that dragging, heavy sound goes on!

By and bye they come up, altogether, as it seems, and go out; returning presently, however, in the same manner, and again laden heavily. This over and over many times with the same silence and secrecy, whilst I crouch trembling in the dark room, watching the flashes of dull light that accompany them to and fro, and listening with every nerve.

All at once the door is flung open, and a woman bearing a candle comes in, and accosts me.

"Well, my dear," she says, "I s'pose you're hungry by this time, so I've brought you a bit o' supper."

I have no need to look on her a second time—the first glance is enough. It is Mrs. Jones!

"Why have I been lured here? What do you want of me?" I cry, springing up with the renewed energy of despair. "Woman, let me go!"

"You'd better eat your supper quietly," she replies, pointing to the plate, which she has laid upon the chair. "You've got a journey to go by and bye."

"But you are thieves—murderers! You have robbed me twice already—What more do you want? You shall suffer for this!"

"Come, be civil," says Mrs. Jones, with a sullen glance beneath the cruel eyelid. "It's no good calling names here, you know. Eat your supper, and be quick about it."

"But have you no pity—no heart—no feeling? Oh, let me go, I entreat you! Ask of me what you will, only

spare me and help me this time! Indeed—indeed, I will forgive you all, and never betray you—only let me go!”

Imploring thus, I clasp my hands, and look up at her with streaming eyes; but she only shrugs her shoulders with a mocking smile, and sits down, obdurate, with folded arms.

Nay, then! I have but one chance left. True, 'tis desperate; but I am desperate also, and driven to the last extremity. Quick as thought, I snatch the knife from the plate, dart towards the door, and am met on the threshold by—Romani!

The weapon is wrested from me in a moment—I am overpowered—carried back—laid like a child upon the straw—my factitious strength ebbs from me all at once, and I become insensible.

The cool night air blowing over my face—the tramp of feet on the wet strand—the uneasy motion, recalls me to myself. Opening my eyes, I see at first only the sky and the stars; then I discover that I am wrapt in a cloak, and carried by two men, and that the Italian walks by my side. Finding that I have recovered, he bends over me, and murmurs in his native tongue—

“Non temete, carissima mia! Son io!” (Fear not, dearest! It is I.)

But I only close my eyes again with a shudder, and still we go on and on, over the beach in the still night.

Suddenly a red light shoots up straight before us, and flushes all the sky for a brief moment. The Italian utters a hasty *“maladetto!”* and the men who are carrying me increase their pace. Something is wrong, it is evident! Now we are joined by three or four others, who start up like spectres from the shadow of the cliffs, and urge us on.

“You’re behind time, master,” says one of the new comers, with a seafaring oath. “The land-sharks are awake to-night, and the boys up yonder want to heave and away! Damnation! there’s another light. Danger’s in the wind!”

“Here, give me the girl!” exclaims another, a huge,

powerful sailor. "One can do that business quicker than two! Run for it!"

I am snatched up like a feather, and borne swifter and more uneasily than ever. Turning a sudden corner, I see a small vessel close in shore—a group of men upon the beach, and a boat tossing on the surf, which breaks at high tide over the rocks.

All at once there is a shout—a confusion—three or four pistol-shots, and a rush towards the sea!

"They're upon us!" cries one in advance. "Get the girl in, and push off!"

But I struggle madly to get free. "Help! help!" I cry, tossing my arms wildly above my head. My voice is drowned in the noise. I see a party of armed men interpose themselves between us and the boat—more shots are fired—I fall suddenly to the ground—all is strife, and trampling, and fury—and then there is a splash of oars, a stray bullet or two more, a cry for "Natalie! Natalie!"—and I am lifted up, pressed to a beloved bosom, covered with tears and kisses—and safe, safe, safe again at last!

They are all round me, Laurent, and Mr. Vaughan, and several others. Some are officers of the preventive service, and some few are fishermen from the village.

"Speak, beloved!" says Laurent, still encircling me with his arms. "Speak to me! Are you hurt? What has happened? Oh, speak!"

But I can only smile feebly, and shake my head, and press the hands that seek mine on all sides.

"And I thought we had lost you for ever!" exclaimed Mr. Vaughan, in broken accents.

"I knew better than that," said an old fisherman, standing by, whom I recognised for the same that had spoken in the morning. "I knew the lady would be found, if we could only lay hold of that young imp of the devil! He peached soon enough when he saw the whip, didn't he, the dog? I should like to have the taming of him, that's all!"

Gathering strength now to look around me, I see the vessel already tacking out to sea—the preventives scattered in groups along the shore—three or four bearing

away a wounded man—and some gathered round a dark object close to the surf.

Struck by a presentiment, a dread, an irresistible curiosity, I disengage myself from Laurent's embrace, and make my way to the spot.

"Who is it?" I whisper, fearfully.

He is lying on his face; but, as I speak, one of the men stoops down, and turns the ghastly features to the moon.

Poor Romani! Dead—quite dead!

"Come away, Natalie," says my master; "this is no sight for you."

"But is it all over?"

"He fell at the first shot. There is no hope."

So they lead me away, and a gentleman, whom I have not hitherto observed, steps forward, and removes his hat.

"Do you not remember me, Natalie?"

Remember him! Even in this wild scene, by this uncertain light, I recognise him instantly. Recognise him without a pang, without a heart-beat, without a regret!

"What, Louis!" I exclaim, holding out my hand.

"Have I to thank you also?"

"More than you suppose," he replies, turning off the embarrassment of the situation with a half laugh, and kissing my hand gallantly at the same time. "I believe I had the honour of shooting our foreign friend yonder!"

"And—and Madame?"

"My mother is well, and impatient to see you. But you are worn out! Laurent, shall you and I carry Natalie this time, *vice* the smugglers defeated?"

But Laurent, who has been watching us earnestly, prefers to perform that task alone. Then, for the second time in my life, he takes me up in his arms, and we form into a line of march, and so turn homewards.

And ever as we go he holds me near his heart, and bending down his noble head, whispers from time to time—

"Natalie, my own—do you love me?"

To which, leaning my cheek against his shoulder with a sweet sense of rest, I answer each time—"Yes."

CHAPTER XLIII.

MADAME ONCE MORE.

I AWOKE next morning from a deep sleep, with a struggling consciousness of some one in the room. The sun was shining gloriously (I could see that, although the curtains of my bed were closed all round), and there was a profound silence, through which I could hear the ticking of my watch upon the dressing-table. Still I felt that there must be somebody in the room, and still I felt too languid and indifferent to sit up and see.

Then it struck me that the day must be considerably advanced for the sun to be upon this side of the house at all; and then I remembered all at once the adventures of the preceding day and night. Turning quite sick and giddy for the moment, I closed my eyes again, and tried to go to sleep. Just as I did so I heard the curtain moved; and, looking up in a startled sort of way, saw a thin white hand gently drawing it aside.

Had twenty years elapsed—had I been a thousand miles away—had I been dying, or delirious, or anything but blind, the sight of that hand would have been enough. I should have known it anywhere—as I knew it then!

An inarticulate cry burst from my lips—trembling, I saw her dimly for a moment through a mist of tears—and the next, I was folded in her arms, and sobbing like a child upon its mother's heart!

"Natalie! Natalie! my good, loving, noble Natalie again!"

For a long time I could say nothing—only look at her, hold her hands in mine, kiss her again and again, and fall to weeping afresh. Then she sat down upon the side of the bed, laid my head soothingly upon her shoulder, supported me round the waist with one arm, and said—

"Why, Natalie, love, I have been seeking you for many weeks, and had given up all hope of ever finding you."

"Seeking me, Madame!"

"It was that, and that alone, which brought us to England."

"But how then"

"How came it that I never sought you before? Listen to me, darling, and I will tell you. You know that when you left Fribourg you were very unhappy, and you will easily suppose that . . . that somebody else was very unhappy also when he discovered that Natalie was gone away for ever. I—I suppose I may name the subject now without hurting your feelings, dear?"

And Madame hesitated, and looked anxiously upon me. I laughed, and shook my head.

"Name it, dearest Madame," I said, "as freely as you please. I have looked upon that as a childish dream for a long, long time; and I have no doubt, from all I hear, that Monsieur Louis does the same."

Madame kissed me again, and resumed, more cheerfully.

"I may tell you, then," said she, "that Louis was broken-hearted. Indeed, for the first few days he was like a madman, and I was more than once upon the point of sending after you, and recalling my little exile. However, I did not do so. After a while my darling boy grew calmer; and, before a week had elapsed, I started with him for Italy. This step was so precipitate, and I was myself so broken-hearted and troubled, that, beyond dismissing my servants and shutting up the house, I made none of the preparations which are generally made by persons setting off upon a tour of three or four years' duration. At the same time I left word with my steward to dispose entirely of the house at Fribourg, and he did so almost immediately. The bulk of my property lay in the canton of Berne—Louis was growing up—it was not likely that I should ever reside there again—and, in short, I no longer wanted it. There the matter ended. For more than three years we roamed from place to place—from Italy to Greece—from Greece back to Italy—from Italy through the Tyrol, and home at last to Berne. Here I found, amongst a number of others, your letters. When I learnt what had happened—that you had never arrived at my sister's—that you were living with strangers, in want of means, friendless, I became distracted with anxiety, and resolved to start immediately for England."

"But had not Mrs. Aylmer's letters . . ." I began, timidly.

Madame sighed, and shook her head.

"I had not corresponded with my sister for years," she said, sadly, "when I sent that letter to her through you. An unhappy difference, resulting from the circumstances of her marriage, had long divided us. You were to have been the link of reconciliation between us; but, thank Heaven! that link is no longer needed. About six months ago, I gave Laurent a letter of introduction to Mrs. Aylmer—I was then in Florence, where he had a studio—and now, arriving somewhat unexpectedly a day or two since, I find all the old dark clouds dispelled, and we are sisters again in heart as well as in name. But to return to yourself, Natalie. I went to Mr. Vaughan's house, and found it shut up. A neighbour said he was out of town; but no one seemed to know where. I was referred to the theatre, and there found the same want of information. Your address was absolutely not to be procured, and I was told that a gentleman (Romain, or Romani, I think, by name) had been making the same inquiries with the same result."

"It is true," I said, with a sigh, remembering his fate. "We kept it purposely secret."

"And then, Natalie," continued Madame, fondling my hair with her hand, "I heard that my little girl was a great singer—a *prima donna* in fact, and the rival of Malibran. I hardly knew whether to be pleased or sorry when they told me this. I do not quite like that you should be upon the stage, dear!"

"It is over, Madame," I said, blushing. "I may never perform publicly again."

"Indeed! And yet it is in your power to make a fortune, is it not?"

"I believe so. I have already earned much money."

"Then your reason for relinquishing it?"

I hesitated—I could not meet her eyes.

"Perhaps," I faltered—"perhaps Laurent may not like it."

She understood all in a moment, and, embracing me

over and over again, wished me happiness and every blessing. Then she pressed me to tell her everything that had happened from the time I first left her, and, as this was likely to take a long time, I laid down again in the bed, and she took a chair by my side. And so, still holding her by the hand, now laughing, now weeping, as the story of my life varied from gay to grave, I told her all—all as I have told it here.

"But, Madame," I said, when I had finished my recital, "there is something that you have not yet told me. Something very important—something about which I should like to know more."

Madame looked surprised.

"What is it, Natalie?"

"Will you not tell me a little about this Italian princess?"

Madame smiled somewhat gravely.

"The young lady," she replied, "is beautiful, wealthy and amiable. Her name is Bianca Bellinzona, and her family is one of the noblest in Florence. I hope, indeed, that it may end in their marriage; but they are both young that they may yet change their minds about it. Louis is still a mere boy."

Here the conversation ended, and Madame returned to her sister's, while I rose and dressed; and (feeling much better) dined late with Laurent and Mr. Vaughan. We were very happy, but our happiness was grave and subdued; for we were all somewhat anxious, and the shadow of a death hung over us.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE UNWINDING OF THE THREADS.

I FOUND myself all at once a heroine of romance. The story of how Mademoiselle Natalie Metz, the successful débutante of last season, was persecuted by Signor Romani, first violinist in the orchestra of Drury Lane Theatre, imprisoned the whole day in a deserted hou

and all but shipped off at the last in a smuggling schooner, was soon circulating in every newspaper all over the kingdom. The interest rose to its height when Mrs. Jones was brought up for examination at the neighbouring county town, and I, the unwilling object of general curiosity, was compelled to appear and give evidence. The examination brought out many revelations, and was succeeded by a trial which lasted for some days, and which I will briefly sum up without entering upon the wearisome details of the Court of Justice.

It appeared from the confession made by the boy, that Mrs. Jones and her husband were desperadoes of the worst grade. Giblet's evidence, such as it was, went far to establish this fact; and my own testimony, dating back to my first arrival in London, put the matter beyond all doubt. The most careful search was made in all quarters for the man, but he was nowhere to be found, and it was at length believed that he got off in safety on board the schooner. And now a long tissue of thefts were brought forward, one after the other. There was scarcely a prison in London where they were not well known. The husband had already been twice transported, and the son, with his old little face and practised whine, had been taken up times out of mind for all kinds of juvenile offences: As for Mrs. Jones, she had made it her especial province to obtain money under false pretences, and to linger about the coach-offices and wharves of London, Liverpool, Plymouth, and other places where they had from time to time resided, for the purpose of robbing strangers who, like myself, were innocent of such dangers. Not only this, but they had been for years connected with the smugglers who at that period lurked about the south coast—had been long suspected of conniving at the concealment of cargoes of tobacco and brandy, and more than once convicted of the surreptitious sale of contraband goods. Of course, a rigid search ensued. In the house to which I had been taken in London—a wretched tenement somewhere in the neighbourhood of Southwark—plunder of all kinds was found in abundance. Amongst the rest, my box, containing the clothes and letters which I had brought from Switz-

land, and £20 in notes of the money stolen from the bureau in Mr. Vaughan's parlour. The latter, fortunately, we were enabled to identify by the numbers; but all the rest was gone. In the house by the sea a valuable cargo of brandy was captured—the same which had been landed the night of my abduction, and which I, in my terror, had taken for something infinitely more terrible.

The only thing that now remained to be accounted for was the manner in which Romani became acquainted with my retreat, and leagued with the smugglers. Mrs. Jones was inflexible, and would confess nothing; and her imp of a son, though willing enough to betray his parents and every one else, knew nothing of that part of the business. At length the confession of the wounded smuggler, who had ever since been lying at death's door in the county hospital, cleared up this last mystery. The man Jones (*alias* Brady, *alias* Davis, *alias* Taylor,) had of late attached himself solely to the crew of the schooner, and abandoned theft and burglary for a smuggling life; whilst his wife and the boy remained in London for the purpose of receiving and disposing of the goods. During this time, he, being unknown in those parts, had ventured one evening ashore to reconnoitre, and, passing near our garden, recognised me. He communicated this news to his wife, and she was cunning enough to turn it to instant advantage. Having already some disreputable acquaintances in the theatre, she was familiar with the current rumour respecting the flight of Mademoiselle Metz and the despair of Signor Romani. To Signor Romani she applied accordingly, and was sent on by him in advance to prepare measures, when she met Giblets one evening near the cottage, and threw him into that state of terror and confusion which had been so alarming and unintelligible to Mr. Vaughan and myself. Then the Italian came—tried the experiment of a last appeal to my pity—led me in a passion of rage and jealousy, and concerted a plan with the adventurers to convey me to the coast of Brittany. In this negotiation the man Jones was Romani's agent, and from him the crew learnt all the story. Th

boy was then instructed to hang about the house till he found me alone, and then persuade me, on some pretence, to follow him to the smugglers' rendezvous. In this plot he succeeded, and all, except the event, turned out as they had planned it.

I have related the rest, and it only remains for me to add, that Mrs. Jones was sentenced to transportation for seven years—that her son was removed to the county gaol, and confined in the ward for juvenile offenders; and that her husband escaped with the rest of the crew, but was supposed to have been shot some eight or ten months after in an affray with the preventive service somewhere along the coast of Devon.

Sitting at breakfast one morning during the time of this trial, a letter is brought to me—a letter addressed in a foreign-looking hand, and written on foreign paper. I have certainly seen the writing before; but I cannot for the moment recal whose it is. Like everybody else under similar circumstances, I turn it over and over—examine the post-mark (which, by the way, is Belgian), and at last solve the doubt by opening the letter.

It is as follows:—

“*Bien cherie Mademoiselle*,—I find myself at present *chez moi* in my château of Roissy, enjoying very much the *délassement* of a *vie de campagne*, after the too fatiguing season of Drury Lane Theatre. I do not know if you are yet familiarized with this country; but I write to tell you how much it is charming here, hoping so to give to you the *envie* of to visit me this delightful autumn. Do come, *ma chère demoiselle*, for it will give to my husband and myself the most lively pleasure to embrace you again, and to make acquainted to you all the amiable friends who surround us with their societies.

“Besides that we are near to the town, we have many amusements. We shoot, we ride, we have a billiard in our house, we dance, and we are often of a *folle gaieté*, therefore do not fear to be *ennuyée*. If you are not ac-

customed to these exercises, I will be myself your instructor, for I am complimented that I am a hunter and shooter à *merveille*.

"I hope that you are quite escaped of that insupportable Signor Romani. *Comment ça ce pauvre bon Monsieur Gammidge ?* I did sometimes imagine that he also was struck of you, dear Mademoiselle. He is a *bon garçon*, *mais c'est un hôtel garni, dont l'appartement le plus élevé est ordinairement le plus mal meublé*.

"I have been cultivating a little more of your language, but you must not laugh at my errors. I am engaged to the *fête de Manchester* for the month of September, and if you will come to visit me now, we will make the voyage together back to England.

"Bien des choses de notre part à Monsieur Vaughan.

"My husband hopes you do remember him, and I hope, my dear Mademoiselle, that you will permit me to write myself,

"Your affectionate friend,

"MARIA FELICIA MALIBRAN DE BERIOT."

Roissy, August, 1836.

Amiable, affectionate, gentle-hearted Malibran ! She lived but to scatter benefits around her—to relieve the indigent—to console the suffering—to encourage the deserving !

I could not accept her kindness, and this was all the intercourse I ever had with her ; but brief as it was, it worked out all the after-happiness of my life.

I never saw her again. When she came to England in that fatal September, I was absent. At Manchester she died. Her spirit was too active for so frail a tenement, and the passionate fire of genius burned too brightly, and too early faded !

"The footfall of her parting soul was softer than her singing."

Very shortly after the receipt of this letter I come up to London for two days, accompanied by Mr. Vaughan, Alice, and Laurent. Giblets, who is now thoroughly do-

mesticated in my master's household, remains behind with the servant, to take care of the cottage, which is now to be their permanent residence, for the old town-house is given up altogether, and my master can compose more freely in the country.

Driving straight to a large hotel in the neighbourhood of the Strand, we are met with a profusion of civilities by the landlord and waiters, and shown to the apartments prepared for our reception. Being fatigued by our long journey, we dine immediately. After dinner, the landlord wishes to know if the ladies and gentlemen would like to see the room upstairs. We should like to see the room upstairs; so our host, who has a shiny bald head, and a high stiff shirt-collar, takes a light in each hand, and precedes us up the staircase. Seen from the back thus, the head and the collar bear a ludicrous resemblance to an egg in an egg-cup.

"I hope, ladies and gentlemen," he says, pompously, "that the decorations will please you. We flatter ourselves that we conduct these things in a very superior style. Really."

The decorations do please us. It is a small room, hung with white curtains, and panelled alternately with paintings and mirrors. The latter are tastefully wreathed with myrtle and white ribbons, and the former are looped up in the same manner. A moderate-sized table occupies the centre of the apartment, and displays preparations for what would seem to be a wedding breakfast. In the centre stands a towering cake, smooth, snowy, and glittering, decorated with orange-blossoms and bunches of white ribbon.

"This is very nicely got up," observes Mr. Vaughan, rubbing his hands. "See, Alice! there is a cake for a little girl to admire!"

"The arrangements, ladies and gentlemen," says the landlord, "are not extensive; but they are, we flatter ourselves, tasteful. And complete. Really."

So we compliment him a little more, and he precedes us downstairs again in the same manner, with the lights reflected on his head, and then wishes us good-night.

The next is an exciting day, and we rise early. At ten o'clock there is a fly waiting to conduct us to the church. It is close by, and we arrive there first, to the immense gratification of a group of small boys assembled round the entrance. Presently two more flies drive up. From the first of these springs a manly, sunburnt young fellow, with a blue coat and anchor buttons, and an unmistakeable quarter-deck roll in his gait. He is followed by another with the same walk and the same buttons; and by a third elaborate but melancholy-looking individual, whom I instantly recognise as Mr. Gammidge.

The second fly brings an elderly lady and two young ones. The elderly lady and one of the young ladies bear a strong resemblance to the sunburnt sailor—so much so, indeed, that I know them to be of one family at a glance. The second young lady wears a bridal bonnet with a white veil. The veil is thrown up as she approaches me, and discovers the pale sweet face of gentle Kate Foster!

"Oh, Kate, dearest, what a happy meeting!"

"Oh, Natalie! how kind you are to us!"

We are both silent for a few moments, and then I beg to be introduced to her companions. The sailor-bridegroom I know already by the portrait in Kate's little room. He has returned at last, and is now Lieutenant Milman. The two ladies are his mother and sister, and his friend is Lieutenant Kinnear.

Ellen Milman is Kate's bridesmaid, and a very pretty, smiling, arch little bridesmaid she makes.

"I need not introduce you to our kind friend, Mr. Gammidge," says Kate (all unconscious of the secret). "Is it not good of him to come?"

The chorus-master smiles and bows at this, but relapses instantly into woe, and takes an early opportunity of retiring behind a pillar to groan privately. Emerging from that retreat when the ceremony commences, he quotes little dismal passages of Shakspeare to me from behind his prayer-book, and then, finding himself overcome with grief at the sight of the ring, retires precipitately to the same ambush, where he indulges in gestures expressive of despair, and remains till it is all over.

He revives, however, at breakfast, under the influence of champagne, and, sitting next to Ellen Milman, gets very cheerful indeed. We are only ten in all; but we are the merriest little wedding-party in the world, and make speeches, drink healths, and enjoy ourselves as much as many a grander and more numerous meeting.

Mr. Vaughan, as the eldest guest, makes *the* speech, and the bridegroom, with some embarrassment, and a plentiful sprinkling of sailor terms, replies to it. Then Laurent proposes the bridegroom's mother and sister—and then Lieutenant Milman proposes "the giver of the feast," and Laurent answers for me—and then Mr. Gammidge, in a superb piece of rhetoric, calls upon the company to drink the health of a nameless lady, who, if what he states be true, possesses every virtue that ever was heard of, and a good many more besides, and turns out at last to be the fair Ellen by his side.

By and bye, the newly married pair take their leave, and set off for Brighton, and the rest of the party one by one disperse.

"I'll tell you what, Natalie," says Mr. Vaughan, laughing—"I swear I saw Gammidge kiss Ellen Milman in the corner, just before they went away."

The curtains were drawn back, and the soft evening air came in, smelling of the vine and the clematis. There were some flowers on the table in a white and purple vase, and the books which she had last been reading; but the flowers drooped, and the books were thick with dust.

They had placed her in an easy chair beside the window, where she could watch the sunset and the sea. Poor pale Constance! Yet she said that she felt better to-day, and Mrs. Aylmer was already planning what they should do when she had quite recovered.

"We will go to Switzerland," she said, fondling the thin hand. "We will go to Switzerland, my love, and visit your dear aunt; and then, when you are strong enough, we will cross over into Italy. We should like so much to be pre-

sent at Louis' wedding in the spring, and the blue sky of the south would give my darling fresh life!"

"I should like," said Constance, with a sad smile, "to see the Alps before I die."

"Hush, darling! Any word but that!"

Madame de Wald, who was standing near, looked up at this, and I saw that her eyes were filled with tears. Presently Constance went on.

"Natalie," she said, "come closer, dear, and tell me more about that old time when you and Laurent were children. I like to shut my eyes and listen to you, and then I try to fancy that I see the mountains, and the vale, and the old brown chalet where you were both so happy."

She had often made me describe these scenes to her of late, so I sat down by her feet, and obeyed her: Madame de Wald rose and left the room. By and bye she interrupted me with a languid gesture of the hand.

"Hush!" she said. "I hear his voice far away!"

I rose and looked out, but there was nothing there. Still she listened, and again she said that it was he. Then, a long way off, his little skiff floated into sight. The distance was so great that I could hardly discern the figure in the stern, much less hear the faintest echo of a sound. And yet she heard him!

She remained silent for a long time after this. Then she asked to be laid upon the bed.

"I feel very tired," she said. "I can hardly keep awake. Kiss me, dear mamma—I shall sleep soundly."

So soundly, Constance, that the angels next awoke thee!

See! She is dreaming now! The faintest ripple of a smile passes over her face—her lips move—she murmurs "Laurent!"—then all is very still.

Is it sleep—or death?

CHAPTER XLV.

ON THE LAKE OF GENEVA.

"It is the hush of night, and all between
 Thy margin and the mountains, dusk, yet clear,
 Mellowed and mingled, yet distinctly seen,
 Save darken'd Jura, whose cap heights appear
 Precipitously steep; and, drawing near,
 There breathes a living fragrance from the shore
 Of flowers yet fresh with childhood; on the ear
 Drops the light drip of the suspended oar,
 Or chirps the grasshopper one good-night carol more."

BYRON.

It was evening, and a golden languor slept on all the scene. Towards Geneva, the shores and mountains—outlined as with a pencil of fire—glowed through a mist informed with the transfiguring glory of the dropping sun. A single sail, steeped in this semi-transparent haze, seemed a thing of air, and floated away as if into the Gates of Heaven. Nearer, the Savoy mountains, purple with rich heaths, and touched with light drifts of snow towards their summits, rose stately and firm—the balancing strength of the landscape. Before us opened the shadowy gorge of the Simplon, beyond which lies Italy. To the left, the two stern peaks of the Dent de Midi pierced the placid sky. Far away, embracing kingdoms in their range, the glittering glacial Alps lifted their mighty heads clad in eternal snows. Clear were they, and yet ethereal—as if painted on the air.

Yonder lay Rousseau's Vevay—a cluster of antique houses and shining spires, with the terraced vines rising in high green slopes around, and here and there a chalet, or a little white church. Faint sounds of music from the band in the market-place ebbed upon the air, and reached us at intervals.

Solitary and far gleamed the Castle of Chillon, close in by the shore; but we could not distinguish Byron's "little isle."

Some gaily-coloured barks darted about like birds over the bright waters, spreading wide their winged fantastic sails, and leaving behind them broad luminous tracks, scarlet, and amber, and green.

We bade the boatmen rest upon their oars. We leaned over the side, and steeped our hands in the blue water, and let it trickle through our fingers. Then I loosened the tresses of my long hair, and, bending down as if to kiss the little waves that came sobbing round us, let them float like weeds upon the lake.

Then the sun sank lower and lower, and descended into a bank of dark clouds, that belted the horizon like a range of hills. A covey of wild gulls rose, screaming, from our path. The sparkling drops along the edges of the lifted oars caught every opalescent hue of sunset, and fell back musically into the water.

Suddenly all was changed. The scene became suffused with a "celestial rosy red," as if Nature, like a timid bride, blushed at the sight of her own beauty. There were rose-tints on the brown mountains of Savoy—rose-tints on the scattered clouds—rose-tints on the air-drawn peaks beyond.

This faded by and bye, lingering fondly on the upper heights long after the valley and lake were steeped in brown shadow. Then the brown became more sombre—the last gleam died off the loftiest summit—the sky grew more darkly blue—a pale star trembled here and there—and the moon rose.

The word was given to go on; the oars dipped down again with measured motion, and the boatmen chanted a plaintive ballad, which was half a hymn.

We sat with our hands linked together, and our eyes fixed alternately upon the sky and the water.

Presently an eight-oared bark swept past us with a lantern at its prow. The rowers were merry; but their mirth jarred upon the sweet silence, and we answered not the shout, with which they greeted us.

The shore seemed to come nearer and nearer—vague echoes came, and went, and wandered past—lights shimmered out, and were reflected in long wavering lines—and we glided, ghost-like, through the path of the moonlight.

Laurent passed his arm around me, and we both rose and looked back.

"See," he said, pointing to the glittering ripples, "see

that silver track, laid like a pavement of stars along the lake! It is as if a conquering army had gone by laden with riches, and scattering the spoils of gold and jewels."

"Or as the path touched by the feet of One who walked of old along the surface of the ocean," I added, softly.

My husband bent down, and pressed his lips to my forehead.

"Dearest," he whispered, "I am content that your simile should be lovelier and holier than mine."

L'ENVOI.

"Our life," saith an old author, "like the harmony of the world, is composed of contrary things; also of several notes, sweet and harsh, sharp and flat, sprightly and solemn; and the musician who would only affect one of these, what would he be able to say? He must know how to make use of them all, and to mix them; and we, likewise, the goods and evils which are congenial with our life. Our being cannot subsist without this mixture, and the one tribe is no less necessary to it than the other."

Reader, he who, having threaded the lanes and thoroughfares of cities, disposeth himself among his books to write romances, should, like that able musician, be skilled in the combination of discords, and in all "the touches of sweet harmony." Pastoral reed and brazen trumpet should be alike obedient in his hands, and sometimes, when the evening shadows gather round, he should go into the pillared cathedral, and play to us requiems and songs of thanksgiving.

But I am not that musician. I tell the simple story of my life with such "sharps and flats" as came within its compass. More than this I cannot do; and for its deficiencies blame, I pray you, not the player, but the instrument.

Yet, within the narrow bounds of "this little organ" have been chronicled many things "sweet and harsh, sprightly and solemn." We have been shown, "as in a

glass, darkly," sufferings and rejoicings, troubles and consolations—

"Fairs, fights, marryings, buryings, and the like."

Therefore I love this quaint comparison which I have quoted to you, and again I repeat that "our life is like the harmony of the world." And yet, upon reflection, I would that he had compared some phases of it to the harmony of the heavens; for life, after all, has something heavenly about it.

I am sorry that Dryden should have said "'tis all a cheat," and still less am I content that Shakspeare should have compared it to "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing."

No, surely no! Let us not believe it! There are matters wherein the heart is the truest prophet and the wisest philosopher. Life, with its hopes, its joys, its despondencies, is neither a lie nor an idle story, but a grave, sweet truth, various, and beautiful, and ever-changing, like the sea and the clouds.

Let us, rather, compare it to a ladder. To that ladder, resting upon earth and reaching to heaven, which was seen of old by the Patriarch when he slept at night between Bethsheba and Haran.

Onward, onward hurries the restless crowd, sighing and seeking—sighing and seeking! Some go up serenely and surely—some begin too hastily, and are weary ere long, and forced to stand by for those who follow—some that have already achieved half the distance shall turn giddy and fall—some that are now at the foot shall soon be scaling the uppermost rounds!

Even so, reader, in this brief history. Of those whom we have known in it, some have mounted, some have fallen, and some have reached the top, and exchanged the vesture of mortality for the "singing-robcs" of the angels round the throne.

It is the Ladder of Life, and we are all climbing it!

THE END.

New Editions of the following Now Ready.

"HALF-HOURS WITH THE BEST AUTHORS."

In 2 vol. crown 8vo, price 12s. cloth lettered,

HALF-HOURS WITH THE BEST AUTHORS.

By CHARLES KNIGHT. A New Edition, with 52 Illustrations by W. Harvey, and Steel Portraits.

"This book is a complete treasury of knowledge and amusement, containing biographical notices of, and extracts from, the best works of upwards of 200 of our most celebrated authors. It is the best and most popular introduction to English Literature ever published—a branch of knowledge shown by the Report of the Civil Service Commission to have been frightfully neglected."

Cheap Edition of

"HALF-HOURS WITH THE BEST AUTHORS."

In 2 vols. 8vo, price 9s. cloth lettered,

HALF-HOURS WITH THE BEST AUTHORS.

By CHARLES KNIGHT. With Critical and Biographical Notices.

Also, uniform, price 4s. 6d. cloth lettered,

HALF-HOURS OF ENGLISH HISTORY. Selected and arranged by CHARLES KNIGHT.

ALPHONSE KARR'S "TOUR ROUND MY GARDEN."

Price 5s. cloth, or 5s. 6d. gilt edges,

A TOUR ROUND MY GARDEN. By A. KARR. A New Edition, edited by the Rev. J. G. WOOD, printed on tinted paper and illustrated with 117 Engravings from designs by W. Harvey.

Blackwood says—"I have read the 'Tour round my Garden,' by Alphonse Karr, and think it is calculated to do a world of good. The stay-at-home man pursues the traveller with incessant banter; he shows that in his little world of a garden he has all the pains and pleasures, all the sights and sounds, of travel."

EDITED BY THE REV. R. A. WILLMOTT.

In One Volume, price 5s. cloth gilt,

BURNS' POETICAL WORKS. Edited by the Rev. R. A. WILLMOTT. With Biographical Notice, and Illustrated by John Gilbert.

Also uniform, price 5s. each, edited by the Rev. R. A. Willmott.

HERBERT'S POETICAL AND PROSE WORKS.

GRAY, PARNELL, WHARTON, AND COLLINS.

COWPER'S POETICAL WORKS.

AKENSIDE AND DYER'S POETICAL WORKS.

Cheapest and best Edition of Webster's Dictionary, in One Vol., 1280 pages, price 16s. cloth lettered,

WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE. Revised and enlarged by C. A. GOODRICH. A new

edition, with the Modern Geographical Names and their pronunciation. This edition contains all the words of the quarto, as well as the authorities and illustrations in all doubtful and contested cases.

"Every one should have a standard dictionary at their elbows, and while they are about it, should get the best. That dictionary is Noah Webster's. It will tell you everything in regard to your mother tongue that you want to know; a copy should be in every house, and every man, woman, and child ought to have access to it."

Order Routledge's Edition, formerly published by Ingram and Co

RAILWAY AND HOME READING.

CHARLES LEVER'S ARTHUR O'LEARY.

Price, 2s. boards.

ARTHUR O'LEARY'S ADVENTURES.

"We would rather be the author of 'Charles O'Malley,' and 'Harry Lorrequer,' than hundreds of 'Pickwick Papers,' and 'Nicholas Nickleby.'"—*Standard*.

PRESCOTT'S WORKS.

Price 2s. each.

FREDINAND AND ISABELLA. 3 Vols.

PHILIP II. 2 Vols.

CONQUEST OF PERU. 2 Vols.

CONQUEST OF MEXICO. 2 Vols.

and

BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL ESSAYS; reprinted from the genuine American Edition, with all the Notes, &c.

"Prescott's works, in point of style, rank with the ablest English historians, and paragraphs may be found in which the grace and elegance of Addison are combined with Robertson's cadence and Gibbon's brilliancy."—*Athenaeum*.

MRS. CROWE'S WORKS.

Price 1s. 6d. each.

Price 2s. each.

LIGHT AND DARKNESS.

SUSAN HOPLBY.

LILLY DAWSON.

NIGHT SIDE OF NATURE.

"Mrs. Crowe has a clearness and plain force of style, and a power in giving reality to a scene, by accumulating a number of minute details, that reminds us forcibly of Defoe."—*Aberdeen Banner*.

MRS. GORE'S WORKS.

Price 1s., boards.

Price 1s. 6d., boards.

THE MONEY LENDER.

HEIR OF SELWOOD.

Price 2s. 6d. cloth.

DOWAGER.

MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS.

PIN MONEY.

SOLDIER OF LYONS.

SELF.

"Mrs. Gore is one of the most popular writers of the day; her works are all pictures of existing life and manners."

MISS M'INTOSH'S WORKS.

Price 1s.

CHARMS AND COUNTER CHARMS.

GRACE AND ISABEL.

Price 1s. 6d.

THE LOWLY AND THE LOFTY.

"Miss M'Intosh's style reminds the reader forcibly of Miss Edgeworth and Mrs. Opie; all her books inculcate high moral principles, and exalt what is honourable in purpose and deep in affection."

W. CARLETON'S TRAITS AND STORIES.

Price 1s. 6d. each.

PHILIM O'TOOLE'S COURTSHIP, &c.

THREE TASKS, SHANE FADLYN'S

POOR SCHOLAR, WILDGOOSE LODGE,

WEDDING, &c.

&c.

PHIL PARCELL, THE GEOGRAPHY OF

THE HEDGE SCHOOL, PARTY FIGHT,

AN IRISH OATH, &c.

"Unless another master-hand like Carleton's should appear, it is to his pages, is alone, that future generations must look for the truest and fullest picture of Irish peasantry, who will ere long have passed away from the troubled and the records of history."—*Edinburgh Review*.

RAILWAY AND HOME READING.

GERSTAECKER'S WORKS.

Price 1s. 6d. each.

WILD SPORTS OF THE FAR WEST. | PIRATES OF THE MISSISSIPPI.

"Gerstaecker's books abound in adventure and scenes of excitement; and are fully equal, in that respect, to the stories either of Marryat, Cooper, or Dana."

MISS AUSTEN'S WORKS.

Price 1s. each.

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY.

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE.

"Miss Austen has a talent for describing the involvements, and feelings, and characters of every-day life, which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with."
—*Sir Walter Scott*.

MRS. BRUNTON'S WORKS.

Price 1s. boards.

Price 1s. 6d.

DISCIPLINE.

SELF-CONTROL.

"Mrs. Brunton surrounds her stories, as it were, with an atmosphere of moral light and beauty, and melts into something like consistency and unity the discordant materials of the tale."

THE MISSES PORTER'S WORKS.

Price 2s. each.

Price 1s. 6d. each.

SCOTTISH CHIEFS (The).
PASTOR'S FIRESIDE.

RECLUSE OF NORWAY.
KNIGHT OF SAINT JOHN.
THADDEUS OF WARSAW.

"Miss Porter's works are popular in every sense of the word; they are read now with as much pleasure and avidity as when they were originally published."

The Author of "Rockingham."

Price 1s. 6d. each.

Price One Shilling, boards.

ROCKINGHAM; or, Younger Brother.
ELECTRA. A Tale of Modern Life.

LOVE AND AMBITION.

"All the works of this author bear the imprint of a master-hand, and are by no means to be confounded with the dubs thrown together in the circulating library."—*Times*.

The Author of "Whitefriars."

Price 2s. each.

WHITEFRIARS; or, the Days of
Charles II.

WHITEHALL; or, the Days of
Charles I.
CESAR BORGIA.

"The author of 'Whitefriars' has won for himself a world-wide fame; his books are eagerly sought after; they will also bear reading a second and third time—an ordeal that so few books are able to stand."

BOOKS FOR THE COUNTRY.

Price 1s. each.

ANGLING AND WHERE TO GO. By
R. Blakely.

PIGEONS AND RABBITS. By E. S.
Delamer.

FLAX AND HEMP, ITS CULTIVATION,
&c. Ditto.

THE KITCHEN.

THE FLOWERS.

THE POULTRY.

Reader, be

Useful Book

each compr

our best art

SMALL FARMS. By Martin Doyle.

CAGE AND SINGING BIRDS. By H.
G. Adams.

THE HORSE. By Cecil and Youatt.

SHOOTING. By R. Blakely.

By Rev. J. G. Wood.

By W. C. L. Martin.

Ditto.

Two Parts. Ditto.

If not, they are practical and
at One Shilling per volume,
illustrated with wood-cuts by
sculptors.

ROUTLEDGE'S SHAKESPEARE:

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN GILBERT,

AND

EDITED BY HOWARD STAUNTON.

TO BE PUBLISHED MONTHLY, IN SHILLING PARTS.

On the 1st of December, 1856, was issued, in super-royal octavo, with Fancy Cover, the First Part of a new, splendidly and profusely illustrated Edition of the

PLAYS OF SHAKESPEARE,

TO BE COMPLETED IN FORTY-TWO SHILLING PARTS.

Each Part will contain Forty-eight Pages of matter, printed in elegant Type on superior paper, and will be elaborately illustrated by JOHN GILBERT.

The Publishers will spare neither labour nor expense in order to render this Edition worthy of a universal patronage. It will be distinguished by care in Editing; beauty and distinctness of Type; splendour and copiousness of Illustration; variety and accuracy in the Explanatory Matter; and extreme Lowness of Price. Edited by MR. HOWARD STAUNTON, a gentleman long distinguished for his acquaintance with the literature of the age of Queen Elizabeth; each Part Illustrated with Twenty original Drawings by JOHN GILBERT, executed in the finest style of Art by the BROTHERS DALZIEL; printed in the best manner with most copious Notes and Annotations illustrative of the manners, customs, costume, and peculiarities of the period; and produced at the cheapest possible price, to secure a very large circulation; the Publishers trust that "Routledge's Shakespeare" will be an Edition worthy of the fame of the immortal Poet, placed within the reach of all classes.

THE FOLLOWING ARE ALREADY PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION:

PART I.—THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

II.—LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST.

III.—COMEDY OF ERRORS.

IV.—ROMEO AND JULIET.

. A Specimen can be seen at any Bookseller's, had gratis on application, or sent free by Post on the receipt of One Penny Stamp.

LONDON: GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & CO., 2, FARRINGTON-STREET.

Edmund Evans, Engraver and Printer, Raquet-court, Flit^d-street.